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Lit., Eng
(Poetry) B

Y 91 Bowdler

N. R. 116

Theological School
IN
HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

Received Jan. 26, 1875.
Gift of Rev. E. A. Guild

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Jan. 26, 1875

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POEMS AND ESSAYS,

Jane

BY MISS BOWDLER.

Vattene in pace alma beata e bella!
Vattene in pace a la superna sede,
E lascia al mondo esempio di tua fede!

ARIOSTO.

PRINTED FROM THE SIXTEENTH ENGLISH EDITION.

Boston:

WELLS AND LILLY, COURT-STREET.

.....

1827.

DIVINITY SCHOOL LIBRARY HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE.

THE following Poems and Essays were written to relieve the tedious hours of pain and sickness. The reader who seeks for amusement only, may possibly receive no gratification from the perusal of them; but for such readers they are not intended.

To the humble and pious Christian, who feels the pressure of distress, and seeks in religion for that support and consolation which nothing else can bestow; to him is presented an example of patience and resignation which no sufferings could conquer.

He will not find in the following pages the pride of stoicism, or the cold precepts of unfeeling prosperity. The Author of these Essays felt, with the keenest sensibility, the uncommon misfortune which condemned her for ten years, in the prime of life, to constant-

ly increasing sufferings; but she found, in the principles which are here laid down, such motives of consolation as rendered her superior to all the sorrows of life, and to the lingering tortures of a most painful death.

They who were present at that awful scene, can need no other evidence in support of a truth which the reader will find often repeated in these Essays, viz. that "though religion cannot prevent losses and disappointments, pains and sorrows; yet in the midst of them all, and when every earthly pleasure fails, it commands, instructs, it enables us to be happy."

Introduction

TO THE TENTH EDITION.

BATH, 1798.

To the edition of the late Miss BOWDLER's works now offered to the public, is added an Essay which was never before printed, as it was written with a view to the peculiar situation of the author. The request of a parent, whose wishes must ever be a law to her, has induced the editor to change her first intention, and she hopes that in doing so she does not presume too far on the indulgence of her readers. She offers to their inspection a nearer view of principles and feelings which they have already approved, and calls on those who have derived support and consolation from the instructions of this amiable sufferer, to strengthen those sentiments by a more intimate acquaintance with her situation and her character. It has been justly observed in a late excellent publication, that "when we produce examples of persons of like passions with their fellow-mortals, walking in confidence and without dismay in the thorny path of suffering,

and steadily pursuing the way to celestial happiness, we speak more forcibly to our hearers than if we urged them with the most eloquent abstract arguments. The practicability of what we recommend to them is evident, and we can with confidence bid them, *Go and do likewise.*"* It is not from the histories of heroes or statesmen that the generality of men can gather the most useful lessons; in this state of trial few are called to *act*, but all to *suffer*.

"Not more the children than sure heirs of pain,"†

every human being must be armed with fortitude to support it; exposed to still greater trials from internal enemies, every Christian is called to fight the good fight of faith, and to take up the cross and follow his Divine Master.

The Editor might with infinite satisfaction mention various instances in which she has reason to believe that the example and the writings of this Author have afforded comfort to her fellow-sufferers, have animated virtue, brought consolation to the mourner, softened the pang of sickness, and lessened the terrors of death; and she presumes to hope that, if departed spirits are permitted to know

* Lectures on the Holy Festivals, by Dr. Glasse.

† Night Thoughts.

what passes in this world, the writer of these Essays may now rejoice in the success of her labours, and bless the sufferings which, by depriving her of the pleasures of youth and the enjoyments of society, made her talents far more extensively useful, and enlarged instead of contracting the circle of her beneficence.

A life spent in retirement affords little to interest the generality of readers: and the gentle virtues which blest the parent, the sister, or the friend, the heroic fortitude which triumphed over pain, the humble piety which welcomed death with a smile, cannot be known to the world till that awful moment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed: but how far this Author has employed her talents for the advantage of others is submitted to the judgment of the public; and the Editor hopes she may be allowed to produce *one* testimony in favour of this book, which will be read with respect and attention by every friend of science and virtue, as she is authorised to say that the following letter (which was inserted in the Bath Chronicle soon after the publication of the Essays) was written by William Melmoth, Esq.

"*To the Printer of the Bath Chronicle.*

"Sir,—The 'Essays of a Lady lately deceased,' which for some time, it seems, were only given to the

author's friends, are now communicated to the public, and the profits arising from the sale appropriated to the benefit of the *General Hospital* in this city. The recommending of any recent production to favourable notice is a sort of panegyric, which always appears in 'such a questionable shape,' as to put every reader upon his guard against imposition. But the hand that was never sullied by burning incense on the altar of the great, may surely venture, without being suspected of an unworthy motive, to hang a wreath on the humble urn of departed virtue. Impressed, at least, with that persuasion, the writer of the present lines does not hesitate to declare, that he considers the performance he has mentioned, as a production of inestimable value to every reader, who has a taste for elegant composition, or a heart disposed to profit by wise instruction: instruction the more forcible, as she was, it is generally said, the bright exemplar of her own excellent precepts. The genuine principles of Christian ethics, undebased by the smallest alloy of bigotry or superstition, are judiciously pursued through their important consequences, and applied with singular accuracy to the various purposes of moral agency. The language and the sentiment lie level to the most *ordinary* understanding, at the same time that the most *improved* will find much to admire in both. A style that neither seeks nor requires the aid of artificial or-

nament, distinguishes every page; and a vein of modest eloquence runs through the whole, which, like the temperate current of that celebrated river so happily described by the poet, is

"Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full."

"But the most striking feature in the dissertations of this intelligent moralist, is the wonderful discernment she discovers in penetrating those secret disguises by which the human heart too often endeavours to impose upon its owner: and the wonder increases, when we are told, that during the last ten years of her short life she was excluded from mixing at large with the world by a long and lingering disease. To preserve and exert the vigour of the mind through one continued series of pain and sickness, is so rare an instance of its rising superior to the weight of corporeal infirmities, as was never before exhibited, perhaps, except in the admirable Paschal. They *both* seem, indeed, to have been actuated by the same kindred spirit; *both* early martyrs to the severest sufferings; and *both* exemplary proofs that Christian philosophy affords a support under the most trying evils of human life, which the disciples of every other philosophy have never been able to acquire.

"I am, &c."

POEMS.

ODE TO HOPE.

I.

FRIEND to the wretch whose bosom knows no joy!
Parent of bliss beyond the reach of fate!
Celestial HOPE! thou gift divine!
Sweet balm of grief! oh, still be mine.
When pains torment, and cares annoy,
Thou only canst their force abate,
And gild the gloom which shades this mortal state.
Though oft thy joys are false and vain,
Though anxious doubts attend thy train,
Though disappointment mock thy care,
And point the way to fell despair;
Yet still my secret soul shall own thy pow'r,
In sorrow's bitterest pang, in pleasure's gayest hour.
For from the date of reason's birth,
That wondrous pow'r was given,
To soften every grief on earth,
To raise the soul from thoughtless mirth,
And wing its flight to heaven.
Nor pain, nor pleasure, can its force destroy,
In every varied scene it points to future joy.

II.

Fancy, wave thy airy pinions,
Bid the soft ideas rise!
Spread o'er all thy wide dominions
Vernal sweets and cloudless skies.
And lo! on yonder verdant plain
A lovely youthful train appear;
Their gentle hearts have felt no pain,
Their guiltless bosoms know no fear;
In each gay scene some new delight they find,
Yet fancy gayer prospects still behind.
Where are the soft delusions fled?
Must wisdom teach the soul to mourn?
Return, ye days of ignorance, return;
Before my eyes your fairy visions spread!
Alas! those visions charm no more,
The pleasing dream of youth is o'er;
Far other thoughts must now the soul employ,
It glows with other hopes, it pants for other joy.

III.

The trumpet sounds to war:
Loud shouts re-echo from the mountain's side,
The din of battle thunders from afar,
The foaming torrent rolls a crimson tide;
The youthful warrior's breast with ardour glows,
In thought he triumphs o'er ten thousand foes:
Elate with Hope, he rushes on,
The battle seems already won,
The vanquish'd host before him fly,
His heart exults in fancied victory,
Nor heeds the flying shaft, nor thinks of danger nigh.
Methinks I see him now—
Fall'n his crest—his glory gone—
The opening laurel faded on his brow–

Silent the trump of his aspiring fame!
No future age shall hear his name,
But darkness spread around her sable gloom,
And deep oblivion rest upon his tomb.

IV.

Through seas unknown, to distant lands,
In quest of gain the bold advent'rer goes,
Fearless roves o'er Afric's sands,
India's heats, or Zembla's snows:
Each rising day his dangerous toil renews;
But toils and dangers check his course in vain;
Cheer'd by HOPE, he still pursues
Fancied good through real pain,
Still in thought enjoys the prize,
And future happy days in long succession rise:
Yet all his bliss a moment may destroy,
Frail are his brightest hopes, uncertain all his joy.

V.

Hark! the sprightly voice of pleasure
Calls to yonder rosy bower,
There she scatters all her treasure,
There exerts her magic power.
Listen to the pleasing call,
Follow, mortals, follow all:
Lead the dance, and spread the feast,
Crown with roses every guest:
Now the sprightly minstrels sound,
Pleasure's voice is heard around,
And pleasure's sprightly voice the hills and dales resound.
Whence rose that secret sigh?
What sudden gloom o'er-clouds thy cheerful brow?
Say, does not every pleasure wait thee now,
That ere could charm the ear, or court the eye?

In vain does nature lavish all her store;
The conscious spirit still aspires,
Still pursues some new desires,
And every wish obtain'd, it sighs and pants for more.

VI.

Are these, O Hope! the glories of thy reign?
The airy dreams of fancy and of youth?
Must all thy boasted pleasures lead to pain;
Thy joys all vanish at the light of truth?
Must wretched man, led by a meteor fire,
To distant blessings still aspire;
Still with ardour strive to gain
Joys he oft pursues in vain,
Joys which quickly must expire;
And when at length the fatal hour is come,
And death prepares th' irrevocable doom.
Mourn all his darling hopes at once destroy'd,
And sigh to leave that bliss he ne'er enjoy'd?

VII.

Rise, heavenly visions! rise;
And every vain delusive fear controul:
Let real glory charm my wond'ring eyes,
And real happiness enchant my soul!
Hail, glorious dawn of everlasting day!
Though faintly seen at distance here,
Thy beams the sinking heart can cheer,
And light the weary pilgrim on his way:
For not in vain did Heaven inspire
That active spark of sacred fire,
Which still with restless ardour glows:
In pain, in pleasure, still the same,
It seeks that heaven from whence it came,
And scorns all meaner joys, all transient woes.

The soul, for perfect bliss design'd,
Strives in vain that bliss to find,
Till, wing'd by HOPE, at length it flies,
Beyond the narrow bounds of earth, and air, and skies.

VIII.

Still unmov'd, let HOPE remain
Fix'd on true substantial joy;
Dangers then shall threat in vain,
Pains torment, or cares annoy:
Then shall every guiltless pleasure
Smile with charms unknown before,
HOPE, secure a real treasure,
Mourn her blasted joys no more.
Then through each revolving year—
Though earthly glories fade away,
Though youth, and strength, and life itself decay—
Yet still more bright the prospect shall appear;
Happier still the latest day,
Brightest far the parting ray.
O'er life's last scene celestial beams shall shine,
Till death at last shall burst the chain,
While songs of triumph sound on high;
Then shall HOPE her power resign,
Lost in endless ecstasy,
And never-fading joy in heaven's full glories reign.

ON THE DEATH OF MR. GARRICK.

THE last sad rites were done—the sacred ground
Was clos'd—and GARRICK's dust to dust return'd;
In life, in death, with general honours crown'd,
A nation own'd his worth—applauded—mourn'd.

For who, like him, could every sense controul,
To *Shakespeare*'s self new charms, new force impart;
Bid unknown horrors shake the firmest soul,
And unknown feelings melt the hardest heart?

Oft when his eye, with more than magic pow'r,
Gave life to thoughts which words could ne'er reveal,
The voice of praise awhile was heard no more,
All gaz'd in silence, and could only feel.

Each thought suspended in a general pause,
All shar'd his passions, and forgot their own—
Till rous'd at length, in thunders of applause,
Th' accordant dictates of each heart were known.

O lost forever to our wond'ring view!—
Yet faithful memory shall preserve thy name;
E'en distant times thy honour shall renew,
And *Garrick* still shall share his *Shakespeare*'s fame.

Thus musing through the lonely aisle I stray'd,
Recall'd the wonders of his matchless pow'rs,
And many a former scene in thought survey'd,
While all unheeded pass'd the silent hours.

With mournful awe I trod the sacred stones,
Where kings and heroes slept in long repose,
And trophies, mould'ring o'er the warrior's bones,
Proclaim how frail the life which fame bestows.

Now sunk the last faint beam of closing day,
  Each form was lost, and hush'd was ev'ry sound;
All, all was silent as the sleeping clay,
  And darkness spread her sable veil around.

At once, methought, a more than midnight gloom
  With death-like horror chill'd my throbbing breast,
When lo! a voice, deep murmuring from the tomb,
  These awful accents on my soul imprest:—

" Vain are the glories of a nation's praise;
  " The boast of wit, the pride of genius, vain:
" A long, long night succeeds the transient blaze,
  " While darkness, solitude, and silence reign.

" The shouts of loud applause which thousands gave,
  " On me nor pride, nor pleasure, now bestow;
" Like the chill blast that murmurs o'er my grave,
  " They pass away—nor reach the dust below.

" One virtuous deed, to all the world unknown,
  " Outweighs the highest bliss which these can give,
" Can cheer the soul when youth and strength are flown,
  " In sickness triumph, and in death survive.

" What though to thee, in life's remotest sphere,
  " Nor nature's gifts, nor fortune's, are consign'd;
" Let brighter prospects to thy soul appear,
  " And hopes immortal elevate thy mind.

" The sculptur'd marble shall dissolve in dust,
  " And fame, and wealth, and honours, pass away:
" Not such the triumphs of the good and just,
  " Not such the glories of eternal day.

" These, these shall live, when ages are no more:
  " With never-fading lustre still shall shine:—
" Go, then, to Heaven devote thy utmost pow'r,
  " And know—whoe'er thou art—the prize is thine."

A BALLAD.*

" RETURN, return, my hapless spouse,
" Nor seek the fatal place,
" Where thoughtless crowds expecting stand
" To see thy child's disgrace.

" Methinks I see the Judges set,
" The Council all attend,
" And JEMMY trembling at the bar,
" Bereft of every friend.

" How shall a mother's eye sustain
" The dreadful sight to see!
" Return, return, my hapless spouse,
" And leave the task to me."

' Persuade me not, my faithful love,
' Persuade me not to go,
' But let me see my JEMMY's face,
' And share in all his woe.

' I'll kneel before his judge's feet,
' And prayers and tears employ—
' For pity take my wretched life,
' But spare my darling boy.

* This little Poem was occasioned by the following fact:——A Post-Boy was apprehended on suspicion of stealing a bank-note from a letter which the author, at the request of a friend, had conveyed to the post-office. This circumstance obliged her to appear as an evidence against the unfortunate young man, where she was witness to the distress of his aged parents, who were waiting at the door of the Hall, to learn the event of a trial which was to decide on the life of an only son. The innocence of his intentions appearing very evident, the youth was acquitted.

'When trembling, prostrate in the dust,
'My heartfelt sorrows flow,
'Sure, sure, the hardest heart will melt
'To see a mother's woe.

'How did I watch his infant years,
'Through fond affection blind,
'And hop'd the comfort of my age
'In JEMMY's love to find!

'Oft when he join'd the youthful train,
'And rov'd the woods among,
'Full many a wishful look I sent,
'And thought he staid too long.

'And when at length I saw my boy
'Come bounding o'er the plain,
('The sprightliest of the sprightly throng,
'The foremost of the train,)

'How have I gaz'd with fond delight,
'His harmless joy to see,
'As home he brought a load of flow'rs,
'And chose the best for me.

'Why would'st thou seek the noisy town,
'Where fraud and cunning dwell?—
'Alas! the heart that knows no guile,
'Should choose the humble cell.

'So might I still with eager joy
'Expect my child's return;
'And not, as now, his hapless fate
'In bitter sorrow mourn.

'Last night when all was dark and still,
'(O wondrous tale to tell!)
'I heard a mournful, solemn sound—
'Methought 'twas JEMMY's knell.

'And oft amidst the dreary gloom
'I heard a dismal groan—
'And oft I felt a clay-cold hand
'Which fondly press'd my own.

'Anon I heard the sound confus'd
'Of all the rustic train,
'And JEMMY's fainting, trembling voice
'For pity begg'd in vain.

'Methought I saw the fatal cord,
'I saw him dragg'd along—
'I saw him seiz'd'——She could no more,
For anguish stopp'd her tongue.

Her faithful partner gently strove
Her sinking heart to cheer;
Yet while his lips of comfort spoke,
He could not hide a tear.

But now the voice of joy or woe
To her alike was vain;
Her thoughts still dwelt on JEMMY's fate,
Her lips on JEMMY's name.

Thus on the mournful pair advanc'd,
And reach'd the fatal place,
Where thoughtless crowds were gather'd round
To see their child's disgrace:——

Such crowds as run with idle gaze,
Alike to every show,
Nor heed a wretched father's tears,
Nor feel a mother's woe.——

Sudden she stopp'd, for now in view
The crowded hall appear'd—
Chill horror seiz'd her stiffen'd frame,
Her voice no more was heard.

She could not move, she could not weep,
Her hands were clasp'd on high;
And all her soul in eager gaze
Seem'd starting from her eye.

For her the husband trembled now
With tender, anxious fear;
"O Lucy! turn and speak to me;"
But Lucy could not hear.

Still fix'd she stood in silent woe,
Still gazing on the door;
When lo! a murmur through the crowd
Proclaim'd the trial o'er,

At once the blood forsook her cheek,
Her feeble spirits fled;
When Jemmy flew into her arms,
And rais'd her drooping head.

The well-known voice recall'd her soul,
She clasp'd him to her breast:——
O joy too vast for words to tell!
Let fancy paint the rest.

SUBJECT

LOVE,

FOR THE VASE AT BATHEASTON VILLA.

With bow unstrung, and arrows broke,
Young Cupid to his mother ran,
And tears fast flowing as he spoke,
He thus his sad complaint began :—

" Ah ! where is now that boasted pow'r,
" Which kings and heroes once confess'd ?
" I try my arrows o'er and o'er,
" But find they cannot reach the breast.

" I seek the Rooms, the Play, the Ball,
" Where Beauty spreads her brightest charms ;
" But lost in crowds my arrows fall,
" And Pleasure slights my feeble arms.

" Yet real Pleasure is not there,
" A phantom still deludes their aim ;
" In Dissipation's careless air
" They seek her charms, but seek in vain.

" Here Pride essays my darts to throw,
" But from her hand they ne'er can harm,
" For still she turns aside the blow ;
" Nor Beauty's self with Pride can charm.

" Coquetry here with roving eyes
" Quick darts a thousand arrows round ;
" She thinks to conquer by surprize—
" But ah ! those arrows never wound.

" Here Cunning boasts to guide their course
" With cautious aim and sly design;
" But still she checks their native force—
" Touch'd by her hand, they drop from mine.

" Here Affectation taints the smile,
" Which else had darted Love around:
" The charms of Art can ne'er beguile:
" But where shall Nature's charms be found?

" While these their various arts essay,
" And vainly strive to gain the heart,
" Good-Sense disdainful turns away,
" And Reason scorns my pointless dart.

" Yet they to Love were once ally'd,
" For Love could every joy dispense;
" Sweet Pleasure smil'd by Virtue's side,
" And Love was pair'd with Innocence."

Fair VENUS clasp'd her darling child,
And gently sooth'd his anxious breast:
' Resume thy darts,' she said, and smil'd,
' Thy wrongs shall quickly be redress'd.

' With artless blush and gentle mien,
' With charms unknowing pride or care,
' With all the graces in her train,
' My lovely ANNA* shall appear.

' Go then, my boy, to earth again,
' Once more assume despotic pow'r;
' For Modesty with her shall reign,
' And Sense and Reason shall adore.'

* Miss ANNE M——LL, now Mrs. D——N.

TO MISS ****,

THEN TWO YEARS OLD.

Sweet blossom, opening to the beams of day!
Dear object of affection's tender care!
For whom she gently smooths the painful way,
Inspires the anxious wish, the ardent pray'r!

How pleasing in thy infant mind to trace
The dawn of reason's force, of fancy's fire,
The soft impression of each future grace,
And all a parent's warmest hopes desire!

How sweet that smile, unknown to ev'ry art,
Inspir'd by innocence, and peace, and joy!
How pure the transports of thy guiltless heart,
Which yet no fears alarm, no cares annoy!

No airy phantoms of uncertain woe
The blessings of the present hour allay;
No empty hopes a fancy'd good bestow,
Then leave the soul to real grief a prey.

Gay pleasure sparkles in thy gentle eye;
Some new delight in every scene appears,
Yet soft affection heaves a secret sigh,
And sends an anxious look to distant years.

While those dear smiles with tender love I view,
And o'er thy infant charms in rapture bend,
Does my fond hope a real good pursue?
And do these arms embrace a future friend?

Should Heaven to me a lengthen'd date assign,
Will e'er that love thy gentle heart engage
With friendship's purest flame to answer mine,
And charm the languor of declining age.

Yet not for me these ardent wishes rise
Beyond the limits of my fleeting years;
For thee, dear babe, my prayers ascend the skies,
And pleasing hope my anxious bosom cheers.

May innocence still guard thy artless youth,
Ere vice and folly's snares thy breast alarm;
While sweetness, modesty, and spotless truth,
Beam from thy soul, and brighten ev'ry charm!

May Heav'n to thee its choicest gifts impart,
Beyond what wealth bestows, or pride pursues;
With ev'ry virtue animate thy heart,
And raise thy efforts to the noblest views.

In transport wrapt may each fond parent see
Through rising years those virtues still improve,
While every tender care now felt for thee,
Thy heart repays with never-ceasing love.

When pleasure smiles, and strews thy path with flow'rs,
And youthful fancy doubles every joy,
May brighter hopes attend thy gayest hours,
And point to bliss which time can ne'er destroy!

And when the pangs of woe thy breast must tear,
When pleasure fades, and fancy charms no more;
Still may those hopes the gloomy prospect cheer,
Unmov'd by grief, unchang'd by fortune's pow'r.

May love, esteem, and friendship, crown thy days,
With joys to guilt unknown, from doubts secure;
While heavenly truth inspires the voice of praise,
And bids that praise beyond the world endure!

Through life to virtue's sacred dictates true,
Be such thy joys as angels must approve,
Such as may lead to raptures ever new,
To endless peace, and purest bliss above.

LOUISA.

A TALE.

" O LEND your wings, ye fav'ring gales,
" And gently wave the sea;
" And swell my husband's spreading sails,
" And waft him home to me!

" His toils and dangers all are past,
" And blest with fortune's store,
" From distant climes he comes at last
" To view his native shore.

" And with him comes the faithful youth,
" Who gain'd my daughter's love;
" Whose virtue, constancy, and truth,
" The coldest heart might move.

" May all the graces wait around,
" And heighten all her charms!—
" He comes, with wealth and glory crown'd,
" To my LOUISA's arms.

" Now fancy flies to distant days,
" And views the lovely pair,
" And hears the voice of general praise
" Their matchless worth declare.

" How shall thy mother's heart expand
" With joys unknown before,
" When thousands bless the bounteous hand
" That gave thee wealth and pow'r!

" Do I not see a distant sail
" O'er yonder waves appear?
" Our ardent vows at length prevail,
" My heart proclaims them near.

" With us in every joy to share
" Our much-lov'd heroes come—
" Propitious Heaven, O hear our pray'r!
" And guide them safely home!"

' Propitious Heaven, O hear our pray'r!'
LOUISA trembling cry'd,
For ah! the chill blast waved her hair,
The rising cloud she spy'd.

Near and more near the tempest drew,
The clouds obscur'd the sky,
The winds in hoarser murmurs blew,
The waves were toss'd on high:

And now they dash against the shore,
And shake the solid ground;
The thunders roll, the torrents roar,
The lightnings flash around.——

Ah! who can paint LOUISA's fear,
Her agonies impart?——
The shrieks of death assail her ear,
And horror chills her heart.

At length, the raging tempest o'er,
She view'd the fatal coast;—
A wreck appear'd upon the shore—
She sunk—in terror lost.

" My life! my joy! my only love!"
A voice at distance cries:—
That voice her inmost soul could move:
She starts with wild surprise.

Now o'er the beach with eager haste
She sees her HENRY fly:
No more she feels her terrors past;
'Twas bliss—'twas ecstasy!

Her aged father too appears,
He press'd her to his heart;
But as he press'd, his streaming tears
Some secret grief impart.

His much-lov'd wife in transport flies,
In all their joy to share;
Yet views her lord with anxious eyes,
And feels a tender fear.

The fond embrace he oft renews,
And oft, with grief oppress'd,
The fatal wreck again he views,
And smites his trembling breast.

" Lo! there," he cry'd, " the sad remains
" Of my once-boasted store,
" For all the fruit of all our pains
" Is sunk—to rise no more.

" Yet should this breast ne'er heave a groan
" For all my fruitless care;
" Did sorrows seize on me alone,
" My woes I well could bear:

" But ah! for thee my heart must grieve,
" For thee I priz'd my gain :—
" And did I then my child deceive
" With hopes believ'd in vain?

" Still to our humble home confin'd,
" Must rural tasks employ
" A nymph to shine in courts design'd,
" And brighten ev'ry joy.

" In thought, by pleasing hope inspir'd,
" I saw my child appear,
" By all belov'd, by all admir'd,
" The fairest of the fair.

" I saw her rais'd to pomp and state,
" And rich in fortune's store;
" I heard the praises of the great,
" The blessings of the poor.

" With fond delight my bosom glow'd,
" By soothing fancy led,
" And heav'n the wish'd success bestow'd:
" But ah! the dream is fled.

" And thou, dear partner of each care,
" This anxious heart hast known;
" Thou too, with me, hast felt thy share
" Of hopes—for ever gone.

" Thy thoughts, like mine, in time to come
" A scene of bliss enjoy'd,
" Till one sad moment's fatal doom
" The airy good destroy'd.

" And thou with me our loss must mourn,
" Thy tears with mine descend;
" And thus, alas! my wish'd return
" Our transient joy must end."

While thus with agonizing sighs
They view'd the fatal place,
LOUISA's mild yet stedfast eyes
Were fixed on HENRY's face.

By her own heart his heart she knew,
She read his virtues there:
Ah! blest indeed the chosen few,
Who thus each thought can share!

Serene and firm their joys shall prove,
And every change endure;
No mean suspicion taint their love,
In just esteem secure.

And now her soul with transport glows,
And animates each grace;
A smile, beyond what pleasure knows,
Adorns her lovely face.

'And is it thus, my friends,' she cry'd,
'When every storm is past,
'When all our fears at once subside,
'Thus do we meet at last?

'O lift with me your hearts to Heav'n
'In strains of ardent praise,
'With transport own the blessings giv'n,
To crown our future days.

'How oft my fervent pray'rs arose,
'While terror shook my soul,
'To HIM who could the storm compose,
'And winds and waves controul!

'My pray'rs are heard—my fears are gone,
'My much-lov'd friends I see;
'I feel a joy till now unknown,—
'And can ye grieve for me.

'Content I shar'd an humble fate,
'Nor wish'd in courts to shine;—
'The airy dream which pleas'd of late,
'With joy I now resign.

'What though no scenes of gay delight
'Amuse each idle guest,
'Nor costly luxuries invite
'To share the splendid feast;

'Yet peace and innocence shall smile,
'And purer joys afford,
'And love, secure from doubt or guile,
'Shall bless our humble board.

'What though we boast nor wealth, nor pow'r,
'Each sorrow to relieve,
'A little from our little store
'The poor shall yet receive:

'And words of peace shall sooth the woe
'Which riches could not heal;
'And sweet benevolence bestow
'An aid which all must feel:

'Beyond the reach of fortune's pow'r
'Her gentle force extends,
'She cheers affliction's darkest hour,
'And joy her steps attends.

'Though here to narrow bounds confin'd,
'Ordain'd to lowly views,
'For ever free, the virtuous mind
'Her glorious path pursues;

'In prosp'rous state, o'er all she show'rs
'The various blessings giv'n;
'In humble life exerts her pow'rs,
'And trusts the rest to Heav'n.

'The lofty dwellings of the great
'Full many a wretch contain,
'Who feels the cares of pomp and state,
'But seeks their joys in vain:

'Yet starting from his short repose,
'Alarm'd at every blast,
'With anxious dread he dreads to lose
'That good he ne'er could taste.

'And oft beneath the silent shade
'A noble heart remains,
'Where Heav'n's bright image is display'd,
'And every virtue reigns.

'Sweet peace and joy that heart shall find,
'Unmov'd by grief or pain:——
'Be such the lot to us assign'd,
'And fortune's frowns are vain.——

'O ye, who taught me first to know
'Bright virtue's sacred flame,
'To whom far more than life I owe,
'Who more than duty claim;

'Ah! let me dry each tender tear,
'And ev'ry doubt destroy,
'Dispel at once each anxious fear,
'And call you back to joy.

'And thou, my HENRY! dearer far
'Than fortune's richest prize,
'I know thy heart——and thou canst dare
'Her treasures to despise:

'A purer bliss that heart shall prove
'From care and sorrow free,
'Content with innocence and love,
'With poverty and me.'—

In transport lost, and freed from fears,
The happy parents smil'd,
And blushing dry'd the falling tears,
And clasp'd their matchless child.

Her HENRY, fix'd in silent gaze,
Beheld his lovely bride:
"O Heav'n! accept my humble praise,"
At length entranc'd he cry'd.

"To all my storms and dangers past,
"If joys like these succeed,
"My utmost wish is crown'd at last,
"And I am rich indeed.

" Then rise, ye raging tempests! rise,
" And fortune's gifts destroy;—
" Thy HENRY gains the noblest prize,
" He feels the purest joy.

" Ecstatic bliss his heart shall prove,
" From care and sorrow free,
" While blest with innocence and love,
" With boundless wealth—in thee.

" Sweet hope o'er every morn shall shed
" Her soul-enlivening ray;
" Celestial peace, by virtue led,
" Shall cheer each closing day.

" Far from ambition's train remov'd,
" And pleasure's giddy throng,
" Our blameless hours, by Heav'n approv'd,
" Shall gently glide along.

" O may I catch that sacred fire,
" Which animates thy breast;
" Like thee to noblest heights aspire,
" Like thee be truly blest!

" Thus shall the pleasing charm of love
" Bright virtue's force increase—
" Thus every changing scene shall prove
" The road to lasting peace.

" And thus, through life, our hearts shall know
" A more than mortal joy,
" Beyond what fortune can bestow,
" Or time, or death, destroy."

ENVY, A FRAGMENT.

ARGUMENT.

ENVY, *her character; her dwelling near the road that leads to the Temple of* VIRTUE. *A fruit-tree gives shelter and refreshment to travellers; she tears all the buds to prevent it. A lamb takes shelter from the snow in her hut; she tears down the roof that it may not protect him, and leaves it so that none may ever find shelter there. Disturbs all travellers. Schemes laid to defeat her. Nothing will do but the shield of* TRUTH, *which is so bright that none dare carry it, because they cannot themselves stand it. At last,* INNOCENCE, *attended by* MODESTY, *undertakes it.* ENVY *attacks them with fury, and throws a dart, which, instead of hurting, only strikes off the veil which hid the face of* MODESTY, *and makes all the world admire her.* ENVY *blushes for the first time.* INNOCENCE *holds up the shield.* ENVY *is dazzled, and becomes almost blind; she flies from them, and wanders about the world, trying to hurt every body, but being too blind to direct her darts, though they sometimes do harm, yet they always recoil upon herself, and give her the severest wounds.*

ENVY,

A FRAGMENT.

I.

Ye pleasing dreams of heavenly poesy,
Which oft have sooth'd my throbbing heart to rest,
And in soft strains of sweetest minstrelsy
Have lull'd the tumults of this anxious breast,
Or charm'd my soul with pleasures unpossess'd:
How sweet with you to wander all the day
In airy scenes, by fancy's pencil dress'd,
To trace the windings of her devious way,
To feel her magic force, and own her boundless sway.

II.

See at her call the awful forms arise
Of ancient heroes, moulder'd in the tomb;
Again vice trembles through her deep disguise,
And virtue triumphs in a dungeon's gloom,
Or smiles undaunted at a tyrant's doom.
Again she waves on high her magic wand—
The faded glories rise of Greece and Rome,
The heavenly muses lead a tuneful band,
And freedom's fearless sons unnumber'd hosts withstand.

III.

And now to softer scenes my steps she leads,
The sweet retreats of innocence and love,
Where freshest flow'rets deck th' enamell'd meads,
And nature's music warbles through the grove;
'Mongst rocks and caverns now she loves to rove,

And mark the torrents tumbling from on high,
And now she soars on daring wings, above
The vast expanse of yon ethereal sky,
Or darts through distant time and long futurity.

IV.

And oft, when weary nature sinks oppress'd
Beneath the load of sickness and of pain,
When sweetest music cannot lull to rest,
And present pleasure spreads her charms in vain,
Bright fancy comes, and bursts the mental chain,
And bears the soul on airy wings away:
Well pleas'd it wanders o'er her golden reign,
Enjoys the transports of some distant day,
And pain's suspended force a moment owns her sway.

V.

Ev'n in the loneliest wild, the deepest shade,
Remote from ev'ry pleasing, social scene,
New wonders rise, by fancy's pow'r display'd;
She paints each heav'nly grace with gentle mien,
Celestial truth, and innocence serene,
And hope, exulting still in future joy,
Though dangers threat, and tempests intervene;
And patience, ever calm, though cares annoy,
And sweet benevolence, whose pleasures ne'er can cloy.

VI.

In dangers firm, in triumphs ever mild,
The awful form of fortitude appears;
Pure joy, of heavenly piety the child,
Serenely smiles, unmov'd by grief or fears;
Soft mercy dries affliction's bitter tears,
Still blest in ev'ry blessing she bestows;
While friendship's gentle voice each sorrow cheers;
Sweet are her joys, and pleasing ev'n her woes,
When warm'd by virtue's fire the sacred ardour glows.

VII.

Thus fancy's pow'r in solitude can charm,
Can rouse each latent virtue in the heart,
Preserve the heavenly spark for ever warm,
And guiltless pleasures ev'ry hour impart.
Yet oh! beware—lest Vice with fatal art
Should taint the gift for virtue's aid design'd;
Lest fancy's sting should point affliction's dart,
Or empty shadows check th' aspiring mind,
By vain delights subdu'd, or vainer fears confin'd.

VIII.

For oft when virtue prompts the gen'rous deed,
And points the way to gain the glorious prize,
Imagin'd ills her upward flight impede,
And all around fantastic terrors rise;
Ev'n vice itself can fancy's pow'r disguise
With borrow'd charms, enchanting to betray:
Oh! then let reason watch with cautious eyes,
Secure its active force in virtue's way,
Then slack the rein at will, and free let fancy stray.

IX.

Thus musing late at evening's silent hour,
My wand'ring footsteps sought the lonely shade;
And gently led by Fancy's magic pow'r,
Methought at once, to distant realms convey'd,
New scenes appear'd, by mortal ne'er survey'd;
Such as were fabled erst in fairy land,
Where elfin knights their prowess oft display'd,
And mighty love inspir'd the warlike band
To seek adventures hard at beauty's high command.

X.

Full many a path there was on every side,
These waste and wild, and those beset with flow'rs;
Where many a pilgrim wander'd far and wide,
Some bent to seek gay pleasure's rosy bow'rs,
And some to gain ambition's lofty tow'rs:
While others view their labours with disdain,
And prize alone the gifts which fortune show'rs;
With careless steps some wander o'er the plain,
And some with ardour strive bright virtue's hill to gain.

XI.

But many foes in ev'ry path were seen,
Who strove by ev'ry art to stop the way:
Here indolence appear'd with vacant mien,
And painted forms of terror and dismay;
And there the passions rose in dread array,
And fill'd with clouds and darkness all the air;
While empty fears and hopes alike betray,
And pride, with folly join'd, destructive pair!
Drew many from each path, then left them to despair.

XII.

Yet still distinguish'd o'er the hostile band,
By all detested, and to all a foe,
Pale Envy rose: while, trembling in her hand,
Her poison'd shaft still aim'd a deadly blow,
Her eyes still wander'd in pursuit of woe:
For her, in vain arose the cheerful morn,
In vain the flow'rs with freshest lustre glow,
Vain all the charms which nature's face adorn;
They cannot cheer a heart with ceaseless anguish torn.

XIII.

Beside the way that leads to Virtue's shrine
This wicked hag her fav'rite dwelling chose,
Around her walls did baneful nightshade twine,
And twisted thorns did all her hut compose;
And still from morning's dawn to ev'ning's close
Some horrid purpose would her thoughts employ;
For never could her heart enjoy repose,
Nor e'er her restless spirit taste of joy,
Save when her cruel arts could others' peace destroy.

XIV.

The sprightly voice of guiltless pleasure's train,
The pleasing smile which peace and virtue wear,
Whose gentle force might charm the sense of pain,
Suspend distress, and smooth the brow of care,
Still with new pangs her cruel heart would tear:
But when she heard affliction's bitter cries,
Or view'd the horrid form of dark despair,
A transient gladness lighten'd in her eyes—
But transient still and vain are Envy's wretched joys.

* * * * * * * *

ON THE NEW YEAR.

'Tis past:—another year for ever gone
Proclaims the end of all;—with awful voice
It calls the soul to thought. Awhile she turns
From present scenes, and wanders o'er the past;
Or darting forward, strives to pierce the veil
Which hides from mortal eyes the time to come.

O Thou, to grateful mem'ry ever dear!
Whom fond affection still delights to name!
Whom still my heart exults to call 'My Friend!'
In fancy yet be present.——Oft with Thee
In many a lonely walk and silent shade
My soul holds converse;—oft recalls the hours
When pleas'd attention hung upon thy voice,
While the pure dictates of celestial truth
In friendship's gentlest accents charm'd my ear,
And sooth'd each anxious thought, and shew'd the way
Which leads to present peace and future bliss:
Though now far distant, yet in thought be near,
And share with me reflection's sacred hour.
And oh! to thee may each revolving year
Its choicest blessings bring! May heavenly peace,
To every thoughtless mind unknown—pursued
In vain through scenes of visionary good—
That peace which dwells with piety alone,
Still on thy steps through every stage attend!
And purest joy from virtue's sacred source,
Blest in the thought of many a well-spent day,
Blest in the prospect of unbounded bliss,
Cheer every hour, and triumph in the last!

As when a traveller, who long has rov'd
Through many a varied path, at length attains
Some eminence, from whence he views the land
Which late he pass'd—groves, streams, and lawns appear,
And hills with flocks adorn'd, and lofty woods;
And ev'ry charm which nature's hand bestows
In rich profusion decks the smiling scene—
No more he views the rugged thorny way,
The steep ascent, the slippery path, which led
High o'er the brink of some rude precipice;
Unnumber'd beauties, scarce observ'd before,
At once combine to charm his raptur'd sight,
And backward turning, oft in transport lost,
His toils and dangers past no more are felt,
But long and tedious seems the road to come:——
Thus oft, when youth is fled, when health decays,
And cares perplex, and trifling pleasures cloy;
Sick of vain hopes, and tir'd of present scenes,
The soul returns to joys she feels no more,
And backward casts her view. Then fancy comes
In memory's form, and gilds the long-past days,
Recalls the faded images of joy,
Paints every happy moment happier still;
But hides each anxious fear, and heartfelt pang,
Each pleasure lost, and hope pursu'd in vain,
Which oft o'erspread with gloom the gayest hour,
And taught ev'n youth and innocence to mourn.

O happiness, in every varied scene,
Through toil, through danger, and through pain pursu'd!
Yet oft when present scarce enjoy'd;—when past,
Recall'd to wound the heart, to blast the sweets
Yet given to life;—how are thy votaries,
Misled by vain delusions, thus deceiv'd!
Let rising Hope, for ever on the wing,

Still point to distant good, to perfect bliss;
While, conscious of superior pow'rs, the soul
Exulting hears her call, and longs to soar
To scenes of real and unfading joy.
Yet while on earth some feeble rays are shed
To cheer the mournful gloom, oh! let not man
Reject the proffer'd gift!—With innocence
And gratitude enjoy'd, each present good
Beyond the fleeting moment may extend
Its pleasing force.——When nature's varied charms,
In all the gayest lustre of the spring,
Delight the wond'ring view, while every grove
With artless music hails the rising morn,
The sportive lambkins play, the shepherd sings,
Creation smiles, and every bosom feels
The general joy;—oh! say, from scenes like these
Shall not the sweet impression still remain
Of innocence and peace, and social love,
To bless the future hour?—When the glad heart
Exulting beats at Friendship's sacred call,
And feels what language never can express;
While every joy exalted and refin'd,
And each tumultuous passion charm'd to peace,
Own the sweet influence of its matchless pow'r;
(That power which e'en o'er grief itself can shed
A heavenly beam, when pleasure courts in vain,
And wealth and honours pass unheeded by;)
Shall joys like these, on virtue's basis rais'd,
Like fancy's vain delusions pass away?
Oh, no! Nor time, nor absence, shall efface
The ever-dear remembrance; ev'n when past,
When deep affliction mourns the blessing gone,
Yet shall that blessing be for ever priz'd,
For ever felt.——When heaven-born charity
Expands the heart, and prompts the liberal hand

To sooth distress, supply the various wants
Of friendless poverty, and dry the tears
Which bathe the widow's cheek, whose dearest hope
Is snatch'd away, and helpless orphans ask
That aid she cannot give;—say, shall the joy
(Pure as the sacred source from whence it springs)
Which then exalts the soul, shall *this* expire!—
The grass shall wither, and the flow'r shall fade,
But Heav'n's eternal word shall still remain,
And Heav'n's eternal word pronounc'd it blest.

Ye calm delights of innocence and peace!
Ye joys by virtue taught, by Heav'n approv'd!
Is there a heart, which, lost in selfish views,
Ne'er felt your pleasing force, ne'er knew to share
Another's joy, or heave a tender sigh
For sorrow not its own;—which all around
Beholds a dreary void, where hope perhaps
May dart a feeble ray, but knows not where
To point its aim? (For real good, unknown
While present, is pursu'd, but ne'er attain'd:)
Is there a heart like this? At such a sight
Let soft Compassion drop a silent tear,
And Charity reluctant turn away
From woes she ne'er shall feel, nor can relieve.
But oh! let those whom Heav'n has taught to feel
The purest joys which mortals e'er can know,
With gratitude recall the blessings giv'n,
Though grief succeed; nor e'er with envy view
That calm which cold indifference seems to share,
And think those happy who can never lose
That good they never knew:—for joys like these
Refine, ennoble, elevate the mind;
And never, never shall succeeding woes
Efface the blest impression:—grief itself

Retains it still; while Hope exulting comes
To snatch them from the power of time and death,
And tell the soul—*They never shall decay.*

When youth and pleasure gild the smiling morn,
And fancy scatters roses all around,
What blissful visions rise! In prospect bright
Awhile they charm the soul: but scarce attain'd,
The gay delusion fades.—Another comes,
The soft enchantment is again renew'd,
And youth again enjoys the airy dreams
Of fancied good.—But ah! how oft ev'n these
By stern affliction's hand are snatch'd away,
Ere yet experience proves them vain, and shews
That earthly pleasures to a heavenly mind
Are but the shadows of substantial bliss!
But pleasure rais'd by virtue's powerful charm,
Above each transient view, each meaner aim,
Can bless the present hour, and lead the soul
To brighter propects, rich in every good
Which man can feel, or Heav'n itself bestow.

While thus returning o'er the long-past scenes
Of former life, the mind recalls to view
The strange vicissitudes of grief and joy,
O may the grateful heart for ever own
The various blessings giv'n! nor dare repine
At ills which all must share; or deem those ills
From chance or fate (those empty names which veil
The ignorance of man) could ever flow;
But warn'd alike by pleasure and by pain,
That higher joys await the virtuous mind
Than aught on earth can yield, in every change
Adore that Pow'r which rules the whole, and gives,
In pleasure's charms, in sorrow's keenest pangs,
The means of good, the hope—the pledge of bliss.

Thou rising year, now opening to my view,
Yet wrapt in darkness—whither dost thou lead?
What is futurity?—It is a time
When joys, unknown to former life, *may* shed
Their brightest beams on each succeeding day;
When health again *may* bloom, and pleasure smile,
(By pain no more allay'd,) and new delights
On every changing season still attend!
Each morn returning wake the soul to joy
From balmy slumbers, undisturb'd by care;
Success still wait on hope; and every hour
In peace and pleasure gently glide away.——
But ah! how rare on earth are years like this!
In the dark prospect of futurity,
Far other scenes than these may yet remain:
Affliction there may aim her keenest shafts
To tear the heart; while pain and sickness waste
The feeble frame by slow consuming pangs,
And ease and comfort lost are sought in vain;
For there, perhaps, no friendly voice may cheer
The tedious hours of grief, but all around
Expiring joys and blasted hopes appear,
New woes succeed to woes, and every good
On earth be snatch'd away. How then shall man
Salute the rising year? Shall cheerful hope
Receive the welcome guest, or terror wait
In speechless anguish the impending storm?
Presumptuous mortal cease:—O turn thine eyes
On the dark mansions of the silent dead,
And check the bold enquiry;—never more
The rising sun may shed his beams on thee;
Perhaps, ev'n now, the fatal hour is come,
Which ends at once thy earthly hopes and fears,
And seals thy doom through vast eternity.

How awful is the thought! and who shall say
It is not just? What mortal shall disclose
The dark decrees of Heav'n?—But grant, to life
A longer date assign'd, another year
On earth bestow'd; in deepest shades conceal'd
Its good or ill remains; no mortal hand
Can draw the veil which hides it from our view.
Hence then, ye airy dreams by fancy led!
Vain hopes, and vainer fears—deceive no more!
In native lustre bright let truth appear,
With her pure beams illume the dark unknown,
And shew what man of future days can know.

What is futurity?—It is a time
By Heav'n in mercy given, where all may find
Their best, their truest good, the means, the pow'r,
To elevate their nature, to exert
Each nobler faculty, and still to rise
In ev'ry virtue.—Here the best may find
Improvement: for what mortal e'er attain'd
Perfection's utmost point?—And here ev'n those,
Who long, by vice and folly led astray,
Forsook the paths of wisdom and of truth,
May yet return, and with new ardour seek
That long-neglected good, which, though despis'd,
Rejected once, may here be yet attain'd—

Know then, whoe'er thou art, on whom high Heav'n
Another year of life will now bestow,
That year may lead thee to eternal peace,
May cancel follies past, redeem the time
In thoughtless dissipation once abus'd,
Dispel the shades of vice, the gloom of care,
Call forth each latent virtue, and impart
New strength, new hopes, and joys which ne'er shall fail.

Then hail, bright prospect of the rising year!
The school of virtue, and the road to bliss!—
No more the shades of doubt are spread around:
No more ideal pleasures deck the scene
With airy forms of good, which Fancy's self
Scarce dares enjoy; no more by terror led
A train of woes in long succession rise,
And deepest horror o'er the time to come
Extends her baleful influence:—by the pow'r
Of truth subdued, at once they disappear,
And surer hopes and brighter views arise,
Than pleasure e'er could give, or pain destroy,
To chase each vain delusion far away,
And shew the glorious prize which future days
May yet attain.—This, this alone is sure:
The rest, involv'd in dark uncertainty,
But mocks our search:—But oh! how blest the path
(Whate'er it be) which leads to endless peace!—

Then let affliction come:—shall man complain
Of seeming ills, which Heav'n in mercy sends
To check his vain pursuits, exalt his views,
Improve his virtues, and direct the soul
To seek that aid which ne'er can fail, that aid
Which all who seek shall find? Oh! in the hour
Of deepest horror, when the throbbing heart,
Oppress'd with anguish, can sustain no more,
May patience still, and resignation, come
To cheer the gloom!—not such as his who boasts
Superior pow'rs, a mind above the reach
Of human weakness, yet with ardour seeks
The frail support of transitory praise!—
Or his, who, trembling at an unknown pow'r,
Submits in silence to Omnipotence,
And struggling checks the murmur of his breast;—

But that sweet peace, that heartfelt confidence,
(By heav'nly hope, and filial love inspir'd,
In truth's inviolable word secure,)
Which pain and sorrow never can destroy;
Which smile triumphant in the gloom of woe,
And own a father's power, a father's love
O'er all presiding.——Blest in thoughts like these
The mourner's heart still feels a secret joy,
Which pleasure ne'er could yield: no murmurs now
Disturb its peace; but every wish resign'd
To wisdom, power, and goodness infinite,
Celestial hope and comfort beam around
O'er all the prospect of succeeding time,
And never-fading glories close the scene.

O Thou, great source of every good! by whom
This heart was taught to beat, these thoughts to range
O'er the wide circuit of the universe,
To soar beyond the farthest bounds of time,
And pant for bliss which earth could ne'er bestow;—
While worlds unnumber'd tremble at thy power,
And hosts celestial own their loftiest strain
Too weak to tell thy praise;—O how shall man
E'er lift his voice to Thee!——Yet at thy call
Thy servant comes. O hear my humble prayer:—
By thy almighty power direct, sustain
My feeble efforts; and whate'er the lot
To me on earth assign'd, O guide me still,
By the blest light of thy eternal truth,
Through every varied scene of joy or woe;
Support my weakness by thy mighty aid,
And lead my soul to peace—to bliss—to Thee!

ESSAYS.

ON SENSIBILITY.

It is a common observation, that in this world we stand more in need of comforts than of pleasures. Pain, sickness, losses, disappointments, sorrows of every kind, are sown so thick in the path of life, that those who have attempted to teach the way to be happy, have in general bestowed more attention on the means of supporting evil, than of seeking good; —nay, many have gone so far as to recommend insensibility as the most desirable state of mind, upon a supposition, that evil (or the appearance of evil) so far predominates, that the good, in general, is not sufficient to counterbalance it; and that therefore, by lessening the sense of both, we should be gainers on the whole, and might purchase constant ease, and freedom from all anxiety, by giving up pleasures, which are always uncertain, and often lead to the severest sufferings: and this, taking all circumstances together, it has been thought would be a desirable change.

On the same principle, much serious advice has been bestowed on the young, the gay, and the happy, to teach them—to be moderate in their pursuits and wishes, that they may avoid the pangs of disappointment in case they should not succeed;—to allay the pleasure they might receive from the enjoyment of every good they possess, by dwelling continually on the thought of its uncertainty;—to check the best affections of their hearts, in order to secure themselves from the pain they may afterwards occasion;—in short, to deprive themselves of the good they might enjoy, from a fear of the evil which may follow:—which is something like advising a man to keep his eyes constantly shut, as the most certain way to avoid the sight of any disagreeable object.

Those, on the other hand, who are in a state of affliction, are advised to moderate their grief, by considering that they knew beforehand the uncertainty of every good they possessed; that nothing has befallen them but what is the common lot of mankind; that the evil consists chiefly in the opinion they form of it;—that what is independent on themselves, cannot really touch them but by their own fault;—and their concern cannot make things better than they are;—with many other considerations of the same kind, to which probably no person under the immediate influence of real affliction ever paid the least attention; and which, even if they are allowed their greatest force, could

only silence complaints, and lead the mind into a state of insensibility, but could never produce the smallest degree of comfort or of happiness.

In order to determine whether this be really the way to pass through life with the greatest ease and satisfaction, it may not be useless to inquire in what state the mind of man would be, supposing it really to have attained that insensibility, both as to pain and pleasure, which has been represented as so desirable. I speak of a mind possessed of its full powers and faculties, and capable of exerting them; for there may be some, who, from natural incapacity or want of education, are really incapable of it, and can drudge on through life with scarce any feelings or apprehensions beyond the present moment. But if these are supposed to be the happiest of mankind, then the end of the argument will be,

> "In happiness the beast excels the man,
> "The worm excels the beast, the clod the worm."

And it seems scarce possible to suppose any rational creature (not under the immediate influence of passion) to be really so far convinced of this, as to wish to exchange his situation in the scale of being with the beast or the clod.

If then we suppose the mind in full possession of its powers, is it possible to suppose that the way to enjoy happiness, or even peace, is by preventing

their exertion? If positive pain or pleasure are taken away, if all the objects proposed to it make no impression, will the mind therefore be at ease? Far from it, surely. On the contrary, it will be torn in pieces by wishes which will have no object whereon to fix; it will feel in itself powers and capacities for happiness, but finding nothing to make it happy, those very powers will make it miserable; having no motive for action, no object to pursue, every rising day will present a blank, which it will be impossible to fill up with any thing that can give pleasure; and the wish of every morning will be, that the day were past, though there be no prospect that the next will produce any thing more satisfactory.

Could it be possible for any person really to have attained to such a state as this, instead of finding it a state of ease and satisfaction, we should see him weary of himself and all around him—unhappy, with nothing to complain of; and without any hope of being ever otherwise, because he would have no determinate wish, in the accomplishment of which he could promise himself any enjoyment.

But, happily for mankind, a state like this is not to be attained by any thinking person; and those who place their notion of happiness in mere freedom from suffering, must be reduced to envy the happiness of the beasts of the field, for it is not the happiness of man.

Those, indeed, who from a state of excessive suffering are suddenly relieved, and restored to ease of body and mind, may, at the time, feel more joy from that ease than they would have felt from the greatest positive pleasure; but then that joy will be transient indeed, since it arises only from a comparison with past sufferings, the sense of which is quickly lost; and as soon as the mind returns to its natural state, it feels again the want of that enjoyment for which it was formed, and becomes miserable, not from any positive sufferings, but merely from the want of happiness.

Those who take pleasure in arguments which answer no other purpose than to exercise their ingenuity, may amuse themselves with disputing whether this inextinguishable thirst after happiness be really a desirable gift, and whether it might not have been happier for man to have been formed without that activity of mind which prompts him continually to seek for some enjoyment. But to those who feel its force, it is surely a more important point to inquire how it may be best satisfied; and whether it may not be possible to regulate those affections which they cannot suppress, and, by directing them to proper objects, to find in them a source of happiness which, though it can neither prevent sufferings, nor take away the sense of them, may yet be felt at the same time, and serve in a great degree to counterbalance the effect of them.

It must, I believe, be allowed, that every man, who reflects on his own situation, will find that it has its pleasures and its pains; unmixed happiness or misery not being the lot of this life, but reserved for a future state. The happiness of life must then be estimated by the proportion its joys bear to its sorrows; and if what has been before supposed concerning the state of the mind be just, he will not be found to be the happiest man who has the fewest sorrows, but he whose joys overbalance his sorrows in the greatest degree.

This then should be our aim in the pursuit of happiness;—not to conquer the sense of suffering, for that is impossible; not to suppress our desires and hopes, for that (if it were possible) would only debase the mind, not make it happy; but to cultivate every faculty of the soul which may prove a source of innocent delight; to endeavour, as far as possible, to keep the mind open to a sense of pleasure, instead of suddenly rejecting all, because we cannot enjoy exactly what we wish;—above all, to secure to ourselves a lasting fund of real pleasures, which may compensate those afflictions they cannot prevent, and make us not insensible, but happy in the midst of them.

It is very certain that nothing can fully do this except religion, and the glorious prospects it offers to our hopes; this is the only foundation of lasting happiness, the only source of never-fading comfort. While our best affections are fixed on any thing in

this world, they must always give us pain, because they will find nothing which can fully satisfy them; but when once they are fixed on Infinite Perfection, as their ultimate object, the subordinate exercises of them will furnish many sources of pleasure and advantage, and should be cultivated both with a view to present and future happiness.

It seems strange to observe, that there are few, if any, in the world, who enjoy all the blessings which are bestowed upon them, and make their situation in life as happy as it might be. Wherever the selfish passions are indulged to excess, this must always be the consequence; for none can be happy while they make others miserable.

Whoever is possessed of any degree of power, from the greatest monarch on the throne to the master of the meanest cottage, must depend for his happiness on those over whom that power is exercised; and whether he will or no, must share in the sufferings which he inflicts, and feel the want of that satisfaction which he might have received from a different employment of his power.

The truth of this observation has been experienced by all who ever endeavoured to purchase their own happiness at the expense of that of others. But even where this is not the case, where the intentions are good, and the pleasures of life are not embittered by the sense of guilt, it often happens that disappointment brings on disgust; the pleasures which were expected are not found, and

therefore those which might be found are undervalued; the mind is dissatisfied, and seeks for reasons to justify itself for doing so; and when sorrows are sought for, it is not difficult to find them.

Such a disposition can poison every pleasure, and add numberless imaginary evils to those which must inevitably be met with in the path of life. By degrees the activity of the soul is lost; every sorrow appears insupportable; every difficulty unconquerable; no object is thought worth pursuing; and life itself becomes a burden.

To guard against the fatal effects which disappointments are apt to have upon the mind, is a point of the utmost consequence towards passing through life with any tolerable degree of comfort and satisfaction; for disappointments, more or less, must be the lot of all.

At the first entrance into the world, when the imagination is active, the affections warm, and the heart a stranger to deceit, and consequently to suspicion, what delightful dreams of happiness are formed! Whatever may be the object in which that happiness is supposed to consist, that object is pursued with ardour; the gay and thoughtless seek for it in dissipation and amusement; the ambitious, in power, fame, and honours; the affectionate, in love and friendship: but how few are there who find in any of these objects that happiness which they expected!

Pleasure, or fame, even when they are in any de-

gree obtained, still leave a void in the soul, which continually reminds the possessor, that this is not the happiness for which he was formed; and even the best affections are liable to numberless disappointments, and often productive of the severest pangs.

The unsuspecting heart forms attachments, before reason is capable of judging whether the objects of them are such as are qualified to make it happy; and it often happens, that the fatal truth is not discovered till the affections are engaged too far to be recalled, and then the disappointment must prove a lasting sorrow.

But it is not necessary to enumerate the disappointments which generally attend on the pursuits of youth; and indeed the prospect is too painful to dwell upon: the intention of mentioning them is only to guard against the effects they may produce.

The imagination has painted an object, which perhaps is not to be found in this world; that object has been pursued in vain: but shall we therefore conclude, that no object is worth pursuing, and sink into a listless, inactive state, in which we must grow weary of ourselves, and all the world?

The young are too apt to fancy that the affections of their hearts will prove the source of nothing but pleasure; those who are farther advanced in life, are much too apt to run into the contrary extreme. The error of the first, even taking it in the worst light, is productive of some pleasure as

well as pain; that of the last serves only to throw a damp over every pleasure, and can be productive of nothing but pain. It leads indeed to the most fatal consequences, since it tends to make *self* the only object; and the heart which is merely selfish, must ever be incapable of virtue and of happiness, and a stranger to all the joys of affection and benevolence; without which the happiest state in this world must be insipid, and which may prove the source of many pleasures, even in the midst of the severest afflictions. In every state of life, in spite of every disappointment, *these* should still be cherished and encouraged; for though they may not always bestow such pleasures as the romantic imaginations of youth had painted, yet they will bestow such as can be found in nothing else in this world; and indeed they are necessary, in order to give a relish to every enjoyment.

I mention an affectionate and a benevolent disposition together, because I believe, when they are genuine, they never can be separated; and, perhaps, the disappointments so often complained of may sometimes be occasioned by a mistake upon this subject; for there is a selfish attachment, which often usurps the name of friendship, though it is indeed something totally different. It is an attachment like that which a musician feels for his instrument, or a virtuoso for his pictures and his statues;—the affection is not fixed on the object itself, but merely on the pleasure received from it.

Such an attachment as this is liable to numberless little jealousies and uneasinesses; the smallest doubt is sufficient to awaken its fears; the most trifling error excites its resentment, and that resentment is immediately expressed by complaints, and often by upbraidings.

True friendship is not indeed less quick-sighted; it watches with a tender and anxious solicitude to promote the welfare and happiness of the object which it loves; it is a kind of microscope, which discovers every speck; but then the discovery does not excite envy and resentment, still less could it lead to unkindness and upbraidings:—it inspires a concern like that which we feel for our own errors and imperfections, and produces an earnest desire and sincere endeavour to remove them. With such a friend, the heart may appear just as it is, and enjoy the pleasure of an unbounded confidence; but with those whose affection is founded on a regard to themselves, every word and action must be weighed, and the fear of giving offence must throw a restraint over every conversation.

The real friend will be disposed to love all those who are any way connected with the objects of his affection; he will be sincerely interested for their welfare, and will wish to gain their affection, and promote their happiness. The selfish will view them with a jealous eye, continually apprehensive that they may rob him of some part of a treasure which he would wish to engross.

It would be easy to carry on the contrast much farther; for indeed it might be shewn in almost every instance. But what has been said may be sufficient to shew how very wide is the difference between that sort of attachment of which a selfish heart is capable, and that which alone deserves the name of real friendship; though it is often too indiscriminately given to both: the one is an enemy to general benevolence; the other flows from the same source, and belongs to the same character.

Such a disposition, it must be allowed, may prove the source of many pleasures; but it may be objected, that it will prove the source of many sorrows also; and, indeed, in this imperfect state, this truth is too certain to be disputed. But if it can be proved, that on the whole it affords more joys than sorrows, this will be sufficient to the present purpose; if it be allowed that the happiness of man consist in positive enjoyment, not in mere freedom from suffering. And surely much more than this might easily be proved, since it not only can afford pleasure of the most exalted kind, and give new relish to every other pleasure: but even in the midst of the most painful sufferings it ever occasioned, it can at the same time inspire a secret satisfaction, of which those who never felt it can hardly form any idea.

With such a disposition, power and riches may be real blessings; since they furnish frequent opportunities of bestowing happiness, and conse-

quently of enjoying it in the highest degree. But even without these advantages, the truly benevolent, in whatever situation in life they may be placed, will find numberless sources of pleasure and delight, which to others must be for ever unknown. All the happiness they see becomes in some sort their own : and even under the pressure of the greatest afflictions, they can rejoice at the good which others enjoy ; and far from repining at the comparison, they find in the thought of it a pleasure and satisfaction, to which no sufferings of their own can render them insensible ; but which, on the contrary, prove a powerful cordial to help them to support those sufferings.

Even the face of inanimate nature fills them with a satisfaction which the insensible can never know, while they are warmed with gratitude to the Giver of every good, and joy at the thought that their fellow-creatures share those blessings with them. They may even experience something like the pleasure of bestowing happiness, while they rejoice in all that is bestowed, and feel in their hearts that they would bestow it if they could.

It is true, indeed, that they must share in the sorrows of others, as well as in their joys ; but then this may often lead to the heavenly pleasure of relieving them, if not as fully as they could wish, yet at least in some degree ; for true benevolence can discover numberless methods of relieving distress, which would escape the notice of the careless and

insensible. When relief is not in their power, some expressions of kindness, and the appearance of a desire to give comfort and assistance, may at least contribute to sooth the wounded mind, and they may still enjoy the pleasure which attends on every endeavour to do good, even on the unsuccessful; and when they are placed beyond the reach of this, and can only offer up a secret prayer for those whose sufferings they cannot alleviate, even this will be attended with a heartfelt satisfaction, more than sufficient to suppress every wish that they could behold the sorrows of others with indifference, if it were possible that such a wish could ever arise in a truly benevolent heart.

Such a disposition will be a powerful preservative against that weariness of mind, which is so often an attendant on what is generally esteemed a happy situation in this world.

Those who are freed from cares and anxieties, who are surrounded by all the means of enjoyment, and whose pleasures present themselves without being sought for, are often unhappy in the midst of all, merely because that activity of mind, in the proper exercise of which our happiness consists, has in them no object on which it may be employed. But when the heart is sincerely and affectionately interested for the good of others, a new scene of action is continually open, every moment may be employed in some pleasing and useful pursuit. New opportunities of doing good are continually

presenting themselves; new schemes are formed and ardently pursued; and even when they do not succeed, though the disappointment may give pain, yet the pleasure of self-approbation will remain, and the pursuit will be remembered with satisfaction. The next opportunity which offers itself will be readily embraced, and will furnish a fresh supply of pleasures; such pleasures as are secure from that weariness or disgust, which sooner or later are the consequences of all such enjoyments as tend merely to gratify the selfish passions and inclinations, and which always attend on an inactive state of mind from whatever cause it may proceed; whether it be the effect of satiety or disappointment, of prosperity or despair.

Even in the most trifling scenes of common life, the truly benevolent may find many pleasures, which would pass unnoticed by others; and in a conversation, which to the thoughtless and inattentive would afford only a trifling amusement, or perhaps no amusement at all, they may find many subjects for pleasing and useful reflections, which may conduce both to their happiness and advantage; and that not only by being continually upon the watch for every opportunity of doing good to others, even in the most trifling instances, (which alone would afford a constant source of pleasure,) but also by the enjoyment of all the good they can observe in others.

If any action be related, or any expression drop-

ped, which indicates true goodness of heart, they will be heard with satisfaction; the most trifling instance of kindness and attention will be received with a sort of pleasure, of which the selfish can form no idea. Every appearance or description of innocent happiness will be enjoyed, every expression of real friendship and affection will be felt, even though they are not themselves the objects of it.

In short, all the happiness and all the virtues of others are sources of delight to them: and it is a pleasing as well as useful exercise to the mind, to be employed, when engaged in society, in seeking out for these;—to trace to their spring the little expressions of benevolence which often pass unnoticed;—to discover real merit through the veil which humility and modesty throw over it;—to admire true greatness of mind, even in the meanest situation in life, or when it exerts itself upon occasions supposed to be trifling, and therefore, in general, but little attended to.

In these, and in numberless instances of the same kind, much real pleasure might be found, which is too generally overlooked, and which might prove the source of many advantages, both to ourselves and others; for those who really enjoy the good of others, will certainly wish and endeavour to promote it.

By such exercises as these, the best affections of the heart are continually called forth to action, and

the pleasures which they afford may be enjoyed and improved in every different situation in life; for these are pleasures which, more or less, are within the reach of all. In these, the rich and prosperous may find that satisfaction, which they have sought in vain in selfish gratifications; and the afflicted may yet enjoy that happiness which they are too apt to imagine is entirely lost;—but the selfish heart can neither enjoy prosperity, nor support affliction; it will be weary and dissatisfied in the first, and totally dejected in the last.

In order to administer consolation to the afflicted, the usual methods are, either to endeavour to lessen their sense of the evil, by shewing them that it is not really so great as they imagine; or by comparing it with greater evils endured by others; or else to drive it from the thought by the hurry of dissipation and amusement.

The first of these methods may serve to display the talents of the person who undertakes it; and perhaps such arguments may sometimes prevail upon vanity to assume an appearance of fortitude. But how can he, whose heart feels the pang of real affliction, be convinced by argument that he does not feel it? or what relief can it give to his sufferings, to be told that another suffers more? Nor can dissipation or amusement afford a more efficacious remedy, since in these the heart has nothing to do:—in the midst of the gayest scenes, and surrounded by all that the world calls pleasure, it will

shrink into itself, and feel its own bitterness with redoubled force.

It is vain to endeavour to take from the wretched the sense of suffering; pain and grief must be felt; they can neither be subdued by argument, nor lost in dissipation; and while they remain, it is impossible to enjoy that ease which by some is represented as the greatest good of man—they must exclude it!—But must they therefore exclude all positive happiness? Surely no. The wounded heart may still be open to enjoyment, and here it must seek for consolation; it cannot indeed be insensible of pain, but it may yet be sensible of pleasure. And happy are they who have acquired a relish for such pleasures as pain and sorrow cannot take away; since these, sooner or later, must be the lot of all.

Of this kind are the pleasures of affection and benevolence; they enlarge the heart, they prevent it from dwelling on its own sorrows, and teach it to seek for happiness in the good of others; and those who in their happiest days were accustomed to do this, will not become insensible to such pleasures, because they are themselves in a state of suffering.

Every instance of kindness, every friendly endeavour to give ease and comfort, will still rejoice the heart; the pleasure of seeing others virtuous and happy may still be felt; the earnest desire to make them so may still be cherished; and that desire is in itself a pleasing sensation. The endeavour

which it excites affords still higher pleasure; and when that endeavour is blessed with success, the benevolent heart will feel a real joy, to which its own sufferings cannot render it insensible.

By every such exertion, the mind will gain new strength, and enjoy new pleasure; its native vigour, which sorrow had depressed, and which no interested views could have called forth to action, will be restored by benevolence;—the wounded heart may feel the delight of self-approbation;—in short, the afflicted may enjoy the best pleasures of the happy.

But, after all, it must be allowed that all our pleasures, in this imperfect state, even those of the most refined and exalted kind, are liable to numberless sorrows and disappointments. Friends may be removed by absence, or by death; the faults and imperfections of those we love, may wound the heart; affection may be repaid with unkindness, and benefits with ingratitude; the most earnest endeavour to relieve the distressed may prove unsuccessful; and the sincerest desire to promote the happiness of others may miss its aim: in short, every pursuit in this world may end in disappointment. And this thought might indeed be sufficient to check the ardour of the mind, and discourage the best endeavours, had we not a never-failing resource in that assistance and support which religion offers.

It is in the power of every one to secure to himself a happiness of which nothing in this world can

deprive him;—a hope, which is not liable to disappointment;—a friend, who never will forsake him, and who will be always willing and able to assist him.

Those who are placed in a happy situation in this world, if at the same time they can rejoice in such thoughts as these, may enjoy the good which they possess. Every blessing bestowed upon them will fill their hearts with love and gratitude to Him from whom it comes; and these sentiments will add new relish to every pleasure, and make them become real and lasting advantages; means to promote their eternal felicity, not hindrances to stop them in their way, as, by the perverse use of them, they too often are.

Prompted by the same love and gratitude, they will rejoice in giving the best proof of these sentiments, by an earnest endeavour to do good to others; and in this aim they cannot be disappointed, though they should prove unsuccessful; for the honest endeavour, they may be certain, will be accepted.

The fear of losing the blessings they possess will not deprive them of the pleasure of enjoying them; for they remember in whose hands they are; they know they shall enjoy them as long as is really best for them; and that if all else were taken from them, they are secure of an unfailing resource, an Almighty Comforter.

They consider their best enjoyments as independent on this world; the pleasures of friendship and benevolence, though here allayed by disappointment, and interrupted by death, they hope will be renewed hereafter, and enjoyed, pure and unmixed, through eternity.

The love and gratitude they feel, the delight they take in every means of expressing them, will constitute a part of their happiness hereafter.

The heavenly contemplations which exalt their minds, and make them feel that they were formed for higher enjoyments than this world affords, will raise their hopes to that state where alone they can find objects suited to them. And thus every blessing bestowed upon them will be so received, that it will be truly enjoyed here, and will prove a source of real and lasting happiness; and the present good will neither be allayed by anxiety, nor succeeded by weariness and disgust. While it remains, it will be enjoyed to the utmost; and when it is taken away, it will not be immoderately regretted; since that to which it owed its greatest relish will still remain, and prove a source of happiness in the days of affliction and disappointment, as well as in those of prosperity and success.

It is very certain, that there are few, if any, either amongst the afflicted, or amongst the happy, who enjoy to the utmost all the blessings which are bestowed upon them. Those who take a view of their own situation in life, with a sincere desire

to make the best of it, will probably find much more happiness within their power, than, in the moments of uneasiness and discontent, they are apt to imagine. This observation is generally true even of the greatest sufferers.

But let us suppose that this was not the case, for it must be allowed to be possible that all earthly comforts may be taken away:—A person who has long been struggling against the severest afflictions of body and of mind, may have met with nothing but disappointments; and in the midst of all, he may not find a friend to assist and support him, or to bestow that tender, soothing consolation, which can almost convert affliction into pleasure; or, what is still more painful, the friend from whom we expected this may change, and embitter those sufferings he should alleviate; the endeavour to do good, which benevolence inspires may prove unsuccessful; in a word, all in this world may fail.

This is indeed a case rarely, if ever, to be met with; but as it must be allowed to be possible, let us take things in the worst light imaginable, and then consider the happiness which yet remains to balance these afflictions, in the heavenly comforts which religion offers.

The most unhappy may yet find a friend to whom they may freely unbosom all their sorrows with the fullest confidence, and rest secure of finding that consolation which is really best for them, since He is both able and willing to bestow it:—this is a

happiness of which none but themselves can ever deprive them. Though slighted and neglected, perhaps oppressed and injured by the world, yet are they certain that He regards their sufferings, He hears their prayers, and will reward their patience.

When they consider, that all events are at his disposal, and these sufferings are permitted for their greater good, their submission, instead of being full of terror and anxiety, will be an act of love and confidence;—even the wish that they could choose their own lot, will be suppressed; and they will rejoice in the thought that infinite Wisdom and Goodness will do it for them.

When they remember, that all afflictions are trials, and that by bearing them as they ought, they may best express their love and gratitude, and secure his favour and protection,—the activity of their minds will be again awakened, and their utmost efforts again exerted, with a pleasure and satisfaction which can attend on no other pursuit, since all but this are liable to disappointment. Here the intention, not the success, will be considered: and the sincere wish, when nothing more is in their power, will be accepted.

If we are engaged in the service of a friend every difficulty becomes a source of pleasure; we exert ourselves with delight in finding means to conquer it; we even enjoy any suffering which can procure his advantage, or express our affection.

A satisfaction of the same kind may continually be enjoyed by the afflicted. It is true, their sufferings can bring no advantage to their Creator; his happiness can receive no addition from the feeble efforts of his creatures; yet still, to a heart full of love and gratitude, there is a pleasure in exerting every effort to express those sentiments, in doing or suffering any thing which may conduce to that end. In this view, afflictions may be received with real satisfaction, since they afford continual opportunities of expressing our readiness to conform to his will, even when it is most contrary to our own; and this is the strongest proof of love and confidence we are able to give: and therefore, to the heart which truly feels them, must be attended with a satisfaction such as pleasure cannot bestow.

When we read the histories of those who have voluntarily undergone the most painful sufferings, rather than transgress their duty, we admire their virtues, and esteem them happy. Those who receive as they ought the trials which are sent them, do all in their power to follow their examples, and may, in a great degree, enjoy the same happiness; their aims, their wishes are the same; like them, they bless Him who permits the trial; they would detest the thought of escaping from it, by being guilty of the smallest crime; they rejoice in suffering for his sake, and depend, with entire confidence, on his assistance and support.

If at any time the affliction seems too severe to

be supported, and nature almost sinks under the trial, let them anticipate the future time; and think with what sentiments they shall look back upon it;—think, if they can, what joy it will afford them to reflect, that no sufferings could ever shake their resolution; that their love to their Almighty Father, and desire to be conformable to his will, have been still the ruling principles of their hearts, even in the midst of the severest trials; that their afflictions have not made them neglect their duty to Him, or to their fellow-creatures; that their best endeavours have been still exerted, and their entire confidence ever placed in him.

Then let them look farther still, and think of the time when all earthly joys and sorrows will be for ever passed away, and nothing of them will remain but the manner in which they have been received; let them think of the happiness of those who have been "made perfect through sufferings," and who will then look forward to an eternity of bliss.

Will they then wish that they had suffered less? Or who would wish it now, if such are the blessed fruits of sufferings? And it depends on ourselves to make them so: for the assistance of Him, who alone can support our weakness, will never be wanting to those who seek it.

Such reflections, such hopes, as these, can surely afford pleasures more than sufficient to overbalance any afflictions to which we may be liable in this world:—And *these* are pleasures

which the greatest sufferer may feel, in which the most unhappy may rejoice.

To conclude:—Religion cannot prevent losses and disappointments, pains and sorrows: for to these, in this imperfect state, we must be liable; nor does it require us to be insensible to them, for that would be impossible: but in the midst of all, and even when all earthly pleasures fail, it commands—it instructs—it enables us to be happy.

ON THE CHARACTER OF LÆTITIA.

In the midst of a cheerful and animated conversation, the attention of a large company was suddenly called off by the tolling of a neighbouring bell, and the appearance of a funeral passing by the windows. An inquiry was made whose it was? with that sort of indolent curiosity which is sometimes excited by things supposed to be no way interesting, and which hardly attends to the answer;—but a gloom was spread over every countenance, when it was known to be the funeral of the young and beautiful Lætitia, who had lately been the ornament of every assembly in which she appeared, the admiration of all beholders, and the delight of all who knew her intimately.

As several in the company had been acquainted

with LÆTITIA, the conversation naturally turned upon her character. The thought of youth and beauty thus nipped in their bloom, impresses an awful yet tender melancholy on the minds even of indifferent persons, which disposes them to serious thoughts, and makes them anxious to know particulars; and the account now given of her engaged the attention of all who were present.

LÆTITIA had just entered her eighteenth year: her person was uncommonly beautiful, animated by all the vivacity which is natural to that age, and all the sweetness of the most amiable character. Her youthful spirits had never been damped by ill health; nor checked by unkindness and severity; her tender parents, far from restraining her pleasures, had only endeavoured to secure them by innocence, improve them by virtue, and exalt them by religion.

The peace and joy of her heart diffused a charm on every object which surrounded her; and every employment in which she was engaged afforded her new pleasure;—she pursued her studies, and enjoyed her amusements, with the same spirit and alacrity;—every kindness she received filled her heart with gratitude, and all she could bestow was felt by her with that innocent exultation which true benevolence inspires, and in which vanity claims no part.

In the fullness of her heart she might have related some instance of distress which she had reliev-

ed, with the same sentiments with which she related any other circumstance that afforded her the greatest pleasure; for it never entered her thoughts to admire herself for such things, or talk of them as if she was surprised at herself for doing them. They appeared to her so natural, that she imagined every one would have done the like, and only thought herself more fortunate than others, when an opportunity presented itself for indulging her inclination.

From the same principle proceeded her endeavours to please in society. She wished to make all as happy as she could; she wished to deserve and gain affection; but she never thought of supplanting others, or endeavouring to assume a superiority: and, far from desiring to lessen their merits, in order to raise herself by the comparison, she was eager to procure for all the good which she valued herself, and therefore disposed to represent all in the most favourable light. Indeed, it cost her no difficulty to do so, because all appeared to her in that light. Happy in herself, and disposed to be pleased, her attention was naturally turned to the most pleasing circumstances, in every event, and every character.

She often appeared delighted with things which others might have considered as trifles, and that not only in her amusements, but in the characters of those with whom she conversed. Her imagination was disposed to magnify every good and amia-

ble quality, and every little instance of kindness and attention bestowed upon herself; but her affections, though warm and lively, were far from being indiscriminately lavished on all; her heart felt a kind word or look often much more strongly than it deserved, but its tenderest attachments were reserved for a chosen few: and her friendship, like her benevolence, was ardent, animated, and disposed to run almost into excess.

The same disposition appeared in other instances. She enjoyed amusements as much as those who think of nothing but pursuing them, and even found pleasure where many would have thought they shewed superior sense by being tired; but from the midst of the gayest assembly, where her vivacity inspired pleasure to all around her, she would have flown at the call of benevolence, friendship, duty, or religion: and far from thinking she made a sacrifice by doing so, would have enjoyed the opportunity of exchanging a pleasure which only amused her fancy, for one which touched her heart.

In common conversation, her innocent sprightliness, and artless sweetness of manners, won the hearts of those who might have been inclined to envy her uncommon excellencies. There was a gentle earnestness in her solicitude to please, which animated every look and action, and was far different from the studied display of vanity, and the artificial insinuations of flattery; it spoke her

true and genuine sentiments, kept her continually upon the watch for every opportunity of expressing her attention and regard for others, and added a charm, which can hardly be described, even to the most trifling instances of them.

The worst tempers were softened in her presence, and the most gloomy dispositions could hardly avoid sharing in her pleasures; yet the greatest flow of spirits could never, even for a single moment, make her lay aside the gentleness and modesty of her character. She even felt, in a great degree, the timidity which is natural to a delicate mind; but it served only to render her conversation more engaging and interesting; it was a diffidence of herself, not a fear of others.

In the midst of the most playful sallies of her lively fancy, and while she was gaining the admiration of all, far from appearing to lay claim to it, her looks and manners seemed continually to solicit their indulgence, and shewed that she thought she stood in need of it; yet accustomed to encouragement from her infancy, and judging of the benevolence of others by her own, she was disposed to feel a confidence in all, and to be very unguarded in her conversation; but the innocence of her heart afforded her a security, which the greatest caution cannot supply;—she knew no disguise, but she had need of none.

She felt for the sufferings of others with the tenderest sensibility; but she expressed it, not by

boasting of a sentiment which has no merit except in its application, but by an eagerness to assist and relieve, which made her ready to attempt even impossibilities; and by those gentle, soothing attentions, from which even hopeless distress must receive some degree of pleasure. Her disposition to enjoy every pleasure to the utmost made even the least success in her endeavours of this kind appear to her a happiness which could hardly be too dearly purchased.

Her early piety, far from allaying her pleasures, had added to every enjoyment the pleasing sentiment of love and gratitude to Him by whom they were bestowed and the animating hope of brighter joys hereafter. She daily offered up the affections of her innocent heart to Him who made it, and implored his assistance, and protection, with that delightful confidence which true religion can alone inspire;—without this, her greatest pleasures would have wanted their highest relish, and their best security; with it she could enjoy them without anxiety, and consider them as the earnest of future happiness.

Such was LÆTITIA; when in the full bloom of youth and health, which seemed to promise many happy years, she was seized with a sudden illness, which in a few days brought her to the grave.

An account like this could not fail to excite, in the mind of every hearer, reflections of the most serious kind. Such strokes as these, when youth,

beauty, and gaiety are thus suddenly snatched away, are felt even by the most thoughtless characters. The young are warned to consider the uncertainty of the advantages they possess, the vanity of every earthly pleasure, and the transient nature of those qualities which are at present the objects of general admiration; while those who are farther advanced in life, are taught still more powerfully the necessity of preparing for a change, from which even youth and health are no security.

The importance of the present moment is impressed on every mind by the thought of the uncertainty of the next. All acknowledge the folly of setting our hearts on pleasures just ready to escape from us, and the necessity of providing such comforts as may support us in that awful hour which perhaps is now at hand, and such hopes as death itself cannot take away.

Such are the reflections which naturally occur, when a sudden stroke brings home the thought of death to every mind; especially when it has fallen where there was least reason to expect it, and when youth and beauty render the object peculiarly interesting; and such reflections afford an important and affecting lesson, which all must feel for the time, and of which all should endeavour to preserve the impression.

In such a state of mind, when we consider religion as our support and comfort in the hour of death, and as affording us a happiness which shall

last beyond the grave, all must be sensible of its value, and wish to feel its force, and obey its precepts, that they may share in those blessings which that religion can alone bestow.

But the thought of death, even when attended with the most striking circumstances, seldom makes a lasting impression; and those who are merely awed into religion by that consideration, may be too apt to lay it aside, when a variety of other objects succeed, and call off their attention; or may connect the thought of it with a gloomy idea, which disturbs their pursuits and their enjoyments, and which therefore they are glad to drive away. They feel themselves well and happy; they converse with others who are so; new scenes arise, and present objects make a strong impression; and in the hurry of business or pleasure the funeral of LÆTITIA is quickly forgotten.

But it is not from her funeral alone that instruction may be derived. The thought of her early and unexpected death must indeed impress an awe on every mind; and lead to many reflections of the highest importance to all; and which, by such a stroke, are shewn in the strongest and most affecting light; but those excited by her life and character may also afford many useful lessons, which, though less obvious and striking, are yet well worthy of our attention.

The pleasures of youth are often considered by those who are farther advanced in life, with a mix-

ture of pity and contempt, as being the effects of ignorance of the world, and of a kind of enthusiasm, which embellishes every object, and feasts on imaginary enjoyments. This opinion is certainly in some degree true; for none ever lived to maturity, without feeling and lamenting the disappointment of their youthful hopes, and the loss of that pleasing illusion which once led the mind from one enjoyment to another, and filled up the many tedious vacancies of real life; but the disappointment of too sanguine hopes is very apt to lead to a contrary extreme.

The pleasures of youth are indeed greatly owing to the dispositions of the youthful mind; and these, it must be owned, are often the effect of illusions, which time and experience must dispel; but they are far from being always so; and many of those dispositions on which the pleasures of youth are founded, are such as the wise would wish and endeavour to preserve through every period of life.

That expectation of being pleased, which prevails so much in young persons, is one great source of their enjoyments. All are felt before-hand, and their hopes are not easily given up; the conviction that they shall be pleased, makes a strong impression on the imagination, which often lasts long enough to make them really be so, when otherwise they would have found little reason for it. This illusion cannot indeed be preserved in its full force, but the same disposition to be pleased may yet re-

main, and hardly any thing is of so much importance to the happiness of life.

We see people seek for sorrows, as if they were something very scarce and valuable, which it would be a misfortune to overlook. Would they but employ as much attention in seeking for the innocent pleasures which every different situation might afford, and accustom themselves to consider every thing in the most favourable light, such a state of mind would in itself be pleasing, and would lead to many pleasures, which are too often lost merely for want of attending to them.

That desire to please which is so natural to youth, may indeed be discouraged by disappointments; but if preserved through life, will prove a source of pleasure to ourselves and others. It can make even trifles appear agreeable and engaging, and will in a great degree supply the want of every other talent, and render those who possess it always acceptable in society; often indeed much more so than those who are far superior to them in every other respect, but who neglect or despise the little attentions which this disposition will naturally inspire. These should, however, always be distinguished from artifice and flattery, which are the instruments of vanity, not the expressions of benevolence.

In youth, the affections of the heart are warm and lively; the pleasures, and even the hopes which they afford, are pursued, and enjoyed to the

utmost; probably they may lead to sorrow and disappointment; but they know little of their own interests, who endeavour to avoid these, by checking that activity of the mind, which is necessary to its improvement, as well as its happiness; or by suppressing sentiments on which our enjoyments must depend, and which (rightly directed) may prove the means of happiness here and hereafter.

The innocence of youth is another great source of its pleasures; but this is a happiness, which, like that of health, is generally estimated by its loss.

It is not necessary to consider the situation of a person who has been guilty of great crimes; all must be sensible that it is wretched; but many things, which, taken separately, may appear trifles, are yet sufficient to destroy that purity of heart, without which every pleasure must be attended with some allay. This indeed, in the strictest sense of the words, is not to be found in this imperfect state, even in youth itself; still less can it be expected in those who are farther advanced in life.

But innocence of intention, integrity of heart, and a sincere endeavour to do right, are qualities which all may possess, and which afford a security and peace of mind, such as they can never enjoy who are in any degree wanting in them; whose professions differ from their sentiments; and who indulge themselves in those little arts which vanity or self-interest so often suggest, and which are so

common in the general intercourse of society, that the particular instances of them are seldom made the objects of attention, or considered in the light of real faults.

The candour of mind, and unsuspecting temper, so natural to youth, are also productive of many pleasures which painful experience must in some degree destroy. But how many, by the thought of this, are led into errors far more pernicious, and often not less distant from the truth; for suspicion can deceive, as well as simplicity, and frequently misses the mark as effectually.

How greatly is the peace of society disturbed, by offences taken which never were intended, by groundless doubts and apprehensions, and by the imputation of faults and bad intentions which never in reality existed!

To avoid all error is certainly desirable, but the one extreme is liable to it, as well as the other; and that disposition of mind, which in cases that can admit a doubt inclines rather to the most favourable side, is certainly by far the happiest for the possessor, to say nothing of the obligations which benevolence and charity lay upon us in this respect.

Such reflections as these may naturally arise from the consideration of a character like that of Lætitia. Her youth affords many useful lessons to grey hairs, as well as to those who like herself are just entering into life, and who, perhaps, like

her, may be allowed only a few short years to prepare themselves for eternity. Her death sets in a strong light the necessity of such preparation;—her life shews at the same time the happiness of it.

That religion is necessary to our comfort in the time of affliction, and our support in the hour of death, all who have any sense of it are ready to allow; but if considered merely in that light, it is too apt to be neglected in the days of health and prosperity, or obeyed with a cool and often reluctant submission, as a restraint with which it is necessary to comply, in order to obtain the happiness of a future state. Few consider sufficiently its importance to happiness even in this life, and the present pleasures, as well as future hopes, which it may afford to those in whom it is not merely a conviction of the understanding, but a real sentiment of the heart.

Let us then represent to ourselves the situation of those on whom the great truths which religion reveals have made a just impression; who feel that love and gratitude which are due to Infinite Perfection and Infinite Goodness; and in whom these sentiments are the leading principles and animating motives for every action.

To such persons how delightful is the thought that they are under the guidance and protection of an indulgent Father, who can and will order all things for their real good; that every blessing bestowed in this life is not merely a present enjoy-

ment, but an instance of his goodness, a call to that ever-pleasing sentiment—affectionate gratitude, and an earnest of future happiness! Such thoughts give a security to all pleasures: they are no longer enjoyed with trembling anxiety, from a dread that the next moment may snatch them away; for the next moment depends on an Almighty Friend, with whom we can safely entrust our dearest interests.

It has been well observed, by an excellent writer, *Qu'il n'y a point de sentiment plus doux au cœur de l'homme que la confiance;* but if this be true, even in our intercourse with frail and imperfect beings, in whom we may be mistaken; and who, though their intentions may be sincerely good, are often unable to help us, and ignorant of what is best for us; how much greater enjoyment must it afford, when fixed where it can never be mistaken or disappointed! How encouraging is the certainty, that He, who sees the deepest recesses of the heart, will observe and accept the secret good intention which could not be brought to effect, and the sincere endeavour which has been disappointed, and perhaps misinterpreted in this world.

To relieve distress, to do good to others and promote their happiness, must give pleasure to every one who is not lost to all sense of goodness; but how greatly is this pleasure increased, if the object on whom it is exercised be endeared to us by particular affection, or has been recommended to us

by one who is so, and to whom we can in this manner express our affection? What spirit does this consideration give to our endeavours; and what an exalted pleasure attends their success!

This pleasure, in the highest degree, religion adds to every exertion of benevolence. It strengthens the ties of natural philanthropy, by shewing us in all mankind the children of one common parent, the objects of the same redeemed love, and the candidates for the same eternal happiness. In every scene of distress to which we can afford relief, it reminds us, that our best friend has declared, that whatever is done to one of the least of these his brethren, will be considered as done unto himself: and this pleasure depends not on success; for the endeavour, and even the wish, will be accepted, as a proof of love and gratitude.

From the same consideration, religion becomes the only sure foundation of that good humour which is the charm of social life. Can beings, who hope in a few years, perhaps in a few hours, to be united in eternal love and happiness, be disposed to be angry with each other about trifles, and find a satisfaction in saying or doing what may give pain? Were these truths felt as well as acknowledged, they must not only put an end to all violent hatred and animosity, but must also soften all those little irregularities of temper, which so frequently prevent even good people from being as happy in each other as they ought to be.

At the same time, when we are hurt by such things in others, particularly in those we truly love and value, (and from whom, therefore, a trifle can give pain,) how pleasing to look forward to the time when all these imperfections shall be ended, and we shall find nothing to allay the pleasures of affection and esteem; which in this life can never be enjoyed in their utmost perfection, from the mixture of human frailty which is found in a greater or less degree even in truly worthy characters.

But when friendship rises to its purest heights, and meets with as little of such allay as is possible in this imperfect state, still how greatly are even the refined pleasures which it affords improved and exalted by religion! How delightful is the tie which unites two worthy characters in the noblest pursuits, when each is strengthened and animated by the other; and their pleasures, far from being allayed by the continual dread of separation, are heightened by the hope that they will be lasting as eternity!

When the mind is engaged in the pursuit of improvement, and pleased with any little advance it can make; or when it delights itself with the consideration of what is beautiful and amiable in the natural or moral system; how greatly is the pleasure increased by looking forward to a time, when every faculty shall be improved beyond what we can at present conceive, when we shall be qualified for the most exalted enjoyments, and all our contemplations employed on the most perfect ob-

jects! But when we endeavour to enlarge on a subject like this, we must find all our expressions fall short of what we wish to describe.

These are but few instances of the advantages which may be derived from religion, even in the happiest state—a faint sketch of its power to refine, exalt, and secure our pleasures. Happy they to whom experience shall give a more perfect idea of it! They will not be reduced, in the day of affliction, to seek for comforts with which they were before unacquainted, and pleasures which they know not how to enjoy; for the best pleasures of their happiest days will remain, unallayed by any misfortune that can befal them; and the mind, long accustomed to dwell on them and enjoy them, will grow much more attached to them, as other pleasures fail, and be enabled to look forward to the stroke which shall snatch them all away, not only with calm resignation, but with joyful hope.

Far be it ever from us to limit the mercies of the Almighty, or discourage any from having recourse to them, even in their latest moments. Far be it also from us to judge of the future happiness of any, by their present state of mind. An old age of languor and dejection, a death of terror and anxiety, may often be succeeded by an eternity of bliss. But let those who now enjoy health and prosperity never forget that they can have no reason to depend on finding religion their comfort in the hour of death, if they do not find it their happiness in life.

ON POLITENESS.

L'HYPOCRISIE *est un hommage que le vice rend à la vertu*, says La Rochefoucault; and in one sense it certainly is so, for it is an acknowledgment of the superior excellence of virtue; and one who viewed mankind with the eyes of La Rochefoucault, must consider hypocrisy as an advantage to all.

Rousseau, quoting this passage, adds, *Oui, comme celui des assassins de Cesar, qui se prosternoient à ses pieds pour l'egorger plus surement; couvrir sa mechanceté du dangereux manteau de l'hypocrisie, ce n'est point honorer la vertu, c'est l'outrager en profanant ses enseignes.* It is indeed the homage of an enemy; and of all the enemies of virtue, there is perhaps none whose attacks have been more pernicious; and that not only by throwing a disguise over vice, but by setting up an artificial image in the place of real virtue, and confounding the idea of the one with the other, till every appearance is suspected, and the existence of that which is true and genuine, is rendered doubtful, to those whose hearts do not bear testimony to its certainty.

There is hardly any thing which (considered abstractedly) appears so natural as sincerity. Speech was given us to express our thoughts and feelings; and to use it to express what we do not think and feel, is an evident perversion of it. But, alas! man,

fallen from his native innocence, now *dares* not be sincere; conscious of guilt, he seeks disguise; and conscious of disguise in himself, he is ready to suspect it in others.

Thus insincerity first made its way amongst mankind, and by such considerations it has since been cherished and encouraged, though every heart in secret bears testimony against it; and even amongst the greatest hypocrites, few would venture openly to defend it in matters of importance: in these all are ready to declare against it, and sincerity is a quality to which all lay claim; yet in the daily occurrences of common life, it seems to be laid aside by a kind of tacit agreement; few make any scruple of deviating from it themselves, or seem to expect a conformity to it in others: but deceit is practised when it can answer any purpose, and even acknowledged on many occasions, as if it were in itself a matter of the greatest indifference.

It is much too common, in every instance, to judge of actions, not according to what they *really* are, but according to the impression they make upon us. The man who would be shocked at the thought of being a butcher, will feel no remorse at impaling a butterfly: and he who would scorn to tell a solemn lie, will make no scruple of professing esteem and regard which he does not feel, or of encouraging an unexperienced young woman in follies which in his heart he despises, and which he knows will render her ridiculous. Yet the merit of actions

depends not on their apparent effects, nor are we sufficiently acquainted with the consequences which may attend them, to be qualified to judge how far they may extend.

When once we deviate from the straight path, however small the deviation may be, and however strong the reasons for it, we can never know how far we may be led astray, nor what may be the consequence of that deviation. Could these be known at once, the fault which was considered merely as a trifle, would often appear shocking, even to those who paid least attention to it, though in fact they can make no difference in its real nature.

If insincerity be in itself a fault, it must be so independently of the consequences which may follow from it; yet the most trifling consideration seems often to be thought a sufficient excuse for it, and we even hear it defended, as necessary to the peace and pleasure of society. But to whom can it be necessary? Surely to none but those who have something criminal, or at least something disagreeable, to conceal, and whose real characters will not bear the light. The good and amiable qualities want only to be seen as they are, in order to be pleasing and useful, and if every heart were such as it ought to be, the delight of society would be to throw aside all disguise, let every one express his genuine sentiments, and appear to others such as he really is.

But it is easier to polish the manners, than to reform the heart; to disguise a fault, than to conquer it. He who can venture to appear as he is, must be what he ought to be:—a difficult and arduous task, which often requires the sacrifice of many a darling inclination, and the exertion of many a painful effort;—and if there can be any hope of attaining the same end by a shorter and easier method, it is not wonderful that numbers are glad to have recourse to it.

This is, in fact, the principal cause of that insincerity which prevails so much in the ordinary intercourse of society, though there are many others which contribute to it.

Pride makes men endeavour to seem better than they really are, by assuming an appearance of those virtues which they want, and endeavouring to disguise those vices which they cherish.

Selfishness makes them wish to engross a larger share of esteem and regard than is bestowed on others; this introduces flattery, which is an endeavour to purchase esteem, and even affection, with counterfeit coin. It is playing upon the weaknesses of others for our own advantage, and running the hazard of encouraging them in folly, and even in vice, and thereby doing them a real and material injury, merely for the sake of gaining to ourselves the trifling satisfaction of unmerited approbation.

This, to a person of any delicacy, should give more pain than pleasure, from a consciousness of

having indeed deserved the contrary; for who, that is not lost to every generous sentiment, could bear to receive a tribute of gratitude and good-will, in return for professions of esteem, which he never felt, and kindness which he never intended? He may indeed despise the folly and vanity of those who can be pleased with such professions, and possibly they may often be deserving of contempt; but this is no alleviation of his fault, nor can even this excuse be always pleaded.

An innocent heart may be pleased with the flattery, (without giving entire credit to it,) when it is considered as an expression of real kindness: conscious that its own sentiments are warm, lively, and apt to run into excess, it may naturally suppose the same of others; and thus the poison is received under a pleasing disguise, till by degrees it grows familiar, and may produce the most fatal effects.

True politeness—like true benevolence, the source from which it flows—aims at the real good of all mankind, and sincerely endeavours to make all easy and happy, not only by considerable services, but by all those little attentions which can contribute to it. In this it differs essentially from that artificial politeness which too often assumes its place, and which consists in an endeavour, not to make others happy, but to serve the interests of our own vanity, by gaining their favour and good opinion, though at the expense of truth, goodness, and

even of their happiness, if the point in view can be obtained by destroying it.

Flattery is an essential part of this sort of politeness, the means by which it generally succeeds: but true politeness stands in need of no such assistance; it is the genuine expression of the heart, it seeks no disguise, and will never flatter. He who acts from this principle will express to all what he truly feels,—a real good-will, a sincere concern for their happiness, and an earnest desire to promote it. He will not express admiration for a fool, nor esteem for a bad man; but he will express benevolence to all, because he feels it; and he will endeavour to do them good, as far as may be in his power, because he sincerely wishes it.

Flattery is directly contrary to this; it seeks its own ends, without considering what may be the consequence with regard to others. It is also essentially different from that regard which is paid to real merit; for that is a tribute which is certainly its due, and may be both paid and received with innocence and pleasure: but the expressions of this will generally be such as escape undesignedly from the heart, and are far different from the studied language of flattery.

Indeed flattery is not, in general, addressed to real and acknowledged merit. It has been observed by one who seems to have studied it as a science, that a professed beauty must not be complimented upon her person, but her understanding,

because there she may be supposed to be more doubtful of her excellence; while one whose pretensions to beauty are but small, will be most flattered by compliments on her personal charms.

The same may be observed as to other qualities: for though most people would consider flattery as an insult, if addressed to such qualities as they know they do not possess; yet, in general, they are best pleased with it where they feel any degree of doubt, or suspect that others may do so.

When Cardinal Richelieu expressed more desire to be admired as a poet and a critic than as one of the greatest politicians in the world, we cannot suppose it was because he thought these talents of more consequence in a prime minister; but he was certain of his excellence in the one respect, and wanted not to be told what all the world must think of him: in the other he wished to excel, and was not sure of his success.

The same may probably be the reason of the partiality which some writers are said to have expressed for their worst performances. It seems scarcely possible to suppose that Milton really preferred his Paradise Regained to his Paradise Lost; but if he had any doubts of its success, it was very natural for him to feel more anxiety about it, and to endeavour to persuade others, and even himself, of its superior merit.

This is a weakness in human nature, of which flattery generally takes advantage, without con-

sidering, that by such means it not only encourages vanity in those to whom it is addressed, but may also draw them in to make themselves appear ridiculous, by the affectation of qualities to which they have little or no pretension.

Nor does this artificial kind of flattery generally stop at such qualities as are in themselves indifferent; it is too often employed (and perhaps still more successfully) in disguising and palliating faults, and thereby affording encouragement to those whose inclinations were restrained by some degree of remorse.

It is unjust as well as ill-natured to take advantage of the weaknesses of others, in order to obtain our own ends, at the hazard of rendering them ridiculous; but it is something far worse to lend a helping hand to those who hesitate at engaging in the paths of vice, and feel a painful conflict between their duty and their inclination; or to endeavour to lessen the sense of duty in those who are not free from some degree of remorse, and desire to amend. Yet these are, in general, the persons to whom flattery is most acceptable: it sooths their inclinations, and dispels their doubts, at the same time that it gratifies their vanity; it frees them from a painful sensation, and saves them the trouble of a difficult task, while it affords them a present pleasure; and if it do not entirely conquer their scruples, at least it removes one restraint which lay in their way, the fear of being

censured. Yet how often is all this done by those who would think themselves insufferably injured, if they were to be supposed capable of picking a pocket, though in that case the injury might perhaps be trifling, and hardly worth a thought.

If "he who filches from me my good name," has made me "poor indeed," what shall we say of him, who from selfish views, perhaps merely for the sake of obtaining a trifling gratification of his vanity, has done what may lead me to deserve to forfeit that good name even in the smallest instance? And if he has done this by deceit, and has found means to gain affection or esteem in return for it, what other act of dishonesty can exceed the baseness of such proceeding? But these things are too apt to make little impression when practised in what are called trifles, though that circumstance makes no change in their real nature, and none can say how far the consequences even of trifles may extend.

Those who make no scruple of such methods as these, if at the same time, by being much accustomed to polite company, they have acquired a certain elegance of manners, and facility in expressing themselves, will seldom fail to please, upon a slight acquaintance; but the best actor will find it difficult always to keep up to his part. He who is polite only by rule, will probably, on some occasion or other, be thrown off his guard; and he who is continually professing sentiments which he

does not feel, will hardly be able always to do it in such a manner as to avoid betraying himself.

Whatever degree of affection or esteem is gained without being deserved, though at first it may be both paid and received with pleasure, will probably after a time, vanish into nothing, or prove a source of disappointment and mortification to both parties; and even while the delusion lasts, it is scarce possible it should be attended with entire satisfaction to the deceiver; for deceit of all kinds, from the greatest to the most trifling instance of it, must be attended with a degree of anxiety, and can never enjoy that perfect ease and security, which attends on those whose words and actions are the natural undisguised expressions of the sentiments of the heart.

But as mankind are apt to run from one extreme to another, we sometimes see that from a dislike to this artificial politeness, which is continually glossing over faults, both in those who practise it, and those they practise it upon, a roughness, and even brutality of manners is adopted, and dignified with the title of sincerity.

Some persons pique themselves upon saying all they think, and are continually professing to do so; and as a proof of this, they will say things the most shocking to others, and give them pain without the least remorse, for fear of being suspected of flattering them. But is this then the language of their heart? Alas! if it be so, let them set

about reforming it, and make it fit to be seen, before they make their boast of exposing it to public view; yet perhaps there may be as much affectation in this conduct as in the contrary extreme.

Pride may think to gain its own ends by an appearance of singularity, and by setting itself above the approbation of others, as vanity does by condescending to the meanest methods in order to obtain it.

That sincerity which is displayed with ostentation, is generally to be suspected. The conduct which an honest heart inspires flows naturally from it; and those who say rough things, in order to convince others of their sincerity, give some reason to doubt of their being perfectly convinced of it themselves. Both these extremes are not only pernicious to the present peace and pleasure of society, but may also lead to very fatal consequences.

The Flatterer encourages vice and folly, undermines the principles of virtue, and gains, by fraud and artifice, a degree of esteem and regard to which he has no title. The other does what he can to frighten every one from what is right; for if sincerity discover such a heart, disguise must appear desirable; and few consider sufficiently how much the cause of virtue must suffer, whenever a good quality is made to appear in an unamiable light.

Sincerity is indeed the ground-work of all that is good and valuable; however beautiful in ap-

pearance the structure may be, if it stand not on this foundation it cannot last. But sincerity can hardly be called a virtue in itself, though a deviation from it is a fault:—A man may be sincere in his vices, as well as in his virtues, and he who throws off all restraint of remorse or shame, and even makes a boast of his vices, can claim no merit from the sincerity he expresses in so doing.

If he who is *sincere* cannot appear *amiable*, his heart is wrong, and his sincerity, far from being a virtue, serves only to add to the rest of his faults that of being willing to give pain to others, and able to throw aside that shame which should attend on every fault, whether great or small, and which is sometimes a restraint to such as are incapable of being influenced by nobler motives.

Roughness of manners is in fact so far from being in itself a mark of sincerity, that it is merely the natural expression of *one* character, as gentleness is of *another;* and it should always be remembered, that to connect the idea of a good quality with a disagreeable appearance, is doing it a real injury, and leads to much more pernicious consequences than may at first be apprehended. Yet this is too often done, in many instances, not only by those who are interested to promote such a deception, but also by those who take up maxims upon credit, and believe what others have believed, without enquiring into the grounds of such opinions: and this is too much the case with the world in general.

Much has been said and written on the subject of politeness; but those who attempt to teach it, generally begin where they should end; and the instruction they give is something like teaching a set of elegant phrases in a language not understood, or instructing a person in music, by making him learn a few tunes by memory, without any knowledge of the grounds of the science. The polish of elegant manners is indeed truly pleasing, and necessary in order to make the worthiest character completely amiable; but it should be a *polish*, and not a *varnish;* the ornament of a good heart, not the disguise of a bad one.

Where a truly benevolent heart is joined with a delicate mind, and both are directed by a solid and refined understanding, the natural expression of these qualities will be the essential part of true politeness. All the rest is mere arbitrary custom, which varies according to the manners of different nations, and different times. A conformity to this is, however, highly necessary; and those who neglect to acquire the knowledge and practice of it betray the want of some of the above-mentioned qualities.

A person might as well refuse to speak the language of a country, as to comply with its customs in matters of indifference; like it, they are signs which, though unmeaning perhaps in themselves, are established by general consent to express certain sentiments; and a want of attention to them

would appear to express a want of those sentiments, and therefore in regard to others, would have the same bad effect. But though the neglect of these things be blameable, those who consider them as the essential part of true politeness, are much wider of the mark, for they may be strictly observed where that is entirely wanting.

To wound the heart, to mislead the understanding, to discourage a timid character, to expose an ignorant, though perhaps an innocent one, with numberless other instances in which a real injury is done, are things by no means inconsistent with the *rules* of politeness, and are often done by such as would not go out of the room before the person they have been treating in this manner; for though doing such things openly might be considered as ill-manners, there are many indirect ways which are just as effectual, and which may be practised without any breach of established forms. Like the Pharisees of old, they are scrupulous observers of the letter of the law in trifles, while they neglect the spirit of it: and their observance of forms, far from giving any reason to depend on them, on the contrary often serves them as a shelter, under which they can do such things as others would not dare to attempt.

This is also, in general, only put on (like their best dress) when they are to go into company; for whenever politeness is not the natural expression of the heart, it must be in some degree a

restraint, and will therefore probably be laid aside in every unguarded hour, that is to say, in all their intercourse with those whom it is of most consequence to please and endeavour to make happy :— while the unhappiness which sometimes reigns in families, who really possess many good qualities, and are not wanting in mutual affection, is often entirely owing to a want of that true and sincere politeness which should animate the whole conduct, though the manner of expressing it must be different according to different circumstances. No rules can supply its place in the familiar intercourse of those who spend much of their time together.

Politeness is always necessary to complete the happiness of society in every situation, from the accidental meeting of strangers to the most intimate connexions of families and friends ; but it must be the genuine expression of the settled character, or it cannot be constant and universal.— Let us then endeavour to consider the true foundation of that ever pleasing quality distinguished by the name of politeness, leaving the ornamental part of it like other ornaments, to be determined by the fashion of the place and time.

To enter fully into the detail of such a character, would be an arduous task indeed ; but the slightest sketch of what is truly pleasing cannot fail to afford some satisfaction ; and there can hardly be a more useful exercise of the mind, than to dwell on the consideration of good and amiable qualities, to

endeavour to improve upon every hint, and raise our ideas of excellence as high as possible. We may then apply them to our own conduct in the ordinary occurrences of life: we may observe in what instances we fall short of that perfection we wish to attain, endeavour to trace the cause of the want of it in those instances, and learn not to disguise our faults, but to amend them.

True benevolence inspires a sincere desire to promote the happiness of others:—true delicacy enables us to enter into their feelings: it has a quick sense of what may give pleasure or pain, and teaches us to pursue the one, and avoid the other: and a refined understanding points out the surest means of doing this in different circumstances, and of suiting our conduct to the persons with whom we are concerned. The union of all these will constitute that amiable character, of which true politeness is the genuine and natural expression.

The person who has not these qualities may indeed, by other means, attain to something like politeness on some occasions; but the person who possesses them in perfection, can never be wanting in it, even for a moment, in any instance, or in any company;—with superiors and inferiors, with strangers and with friends, the same character is still preserved, though expressed in different ways. Those pleasing attentions, which are the charm of society, are continually paid with ease and satis-

faction, for they are the natural language of such sentiments; and to such a character it would be painful to omit them; while every thing that can give unnecessary pain, even in the smallest degree, is constantly avoided, because directly contrary to it; for no pain can be inflicted by a person of such a disposition, without being strongly felt at the same time.

A superior degree of delicacy may often be the cause of much pain to those who possess it; they will be hurt at many things which would make no impression upon others; but from that very circumstance, they will be taught to avoid giving pain on numberless occasions, when others might do it. Whenever an excess of sensibility is supposed to produce a contrary effect, we may be certain it is, in fact, an excess of selfishness.

True delicacy feels the pain it receives, but it feels much more strongly the pain it gives; and therefore will never give any which it is possible to avoid. Far from being the cause of unreasonable complaints, uneasiness, and fretfulness, it will always carefully avoid such things; it will know how to make allowances for others, and rather suffer in silence, than give them unnecessary pain. It will inspire the gentlest and most engaging methods of helping others to amend their faults, and to correct those irregularities of temper which disturb the peace of society, without exposing them to the humiliation of being upbraided, or even of being

made fully sensible of the offence they give; which often disposes people rather to seek for excuses, than to endeavour to amend. In short, it enlightens and directs benevolence; discovers numberless occasions for the exertion of it, which are too generally overlooked; and points out the surest and most pleasing means of attaining those ends which it pursues.

This earnest desire to promote the happiness of all, which is essential to true politeness, should always be carefully distinguished from that desire of pleasing, in which self-love is in fact the object; for though this may sometimes appear to produce the same effects with the other, it is by no means sufficient fully to supply its place. It is indeed a natural sentiment, which is both pleasing and useful when kept within due bounds.

To gain the good-will of others is soothing to the heart; and they must be proud or insensible, in a very uncommon degree, who are not desirous of it: but much more than this is necessary to inspire true and constant politeness in every instance; and this desire, carried to excess, may produce very pernicious consequences.

From hence sometimes proceed endeavours to supplant others in the favour of those we wish to please, and to recommend ourselves at their expense, together with all the train of evils which attend on envy and jealousy.

From hence also flattery, and all those means of gaining favour, by which the real good of others is sacrificed to our own interest; and from hence much of the insincerity which prevails in common conversation. False maxims are adopted, and the real sentiments disguised; a disposition to ridicule, censoriousness, and many other faults, is encouraged; and truth and goodness are sacrificed to the fear of giving offence: and thus an inclination, in itself innocent, and calculated to promote the pleasure and advantage of society, is made productive of much evil, by being suffered to act beyond its proper sphere, and to take the place of others, which should always be preferred before it.

But even considered in the most favourable light, the desire of pleasing others falls far short of that endeavour to make them happy, which benevolence inspires; for the one is only exerted in such instances as can gain observation; the other extends to every thing within its power, and can sacrifice even the desire of pleasing to that of doing real good, whenever the one is inconsistent with the other. Yet where this is done with that true politeness which is the effect of those qualities already mentioned, it is very likely to succeed better in the end, even as to gaining favour with all those whose favour is truly valuable; but it depends not on such circumstances; it is a settled character, which is naturally displayed in every instance without art or study.

It may also be observed, that though a great degree of affection may subsist where this quality is wanting, yet that want will always prove an allay to the pleasure of it.

We see persons who really feel this affection, who would do and suffer a great deal to serve each other, and would consider a separation by absence or death as one of the greatest of evils; and who yet, merely from the want of this quality, lose a thousand opportunities of promoting the happiness of those they truly love and value, and often give them real pain, without ever suspecting themselves of being wanting in regard and affection, because they feel that they would be ready to exert themselves in doing them any essential service.

Thus the pleasure of society is destroyed, and the supposed consciousness of possessing good qualities (for the exertion of which it is possible no opportunity may ever offer) is thought to make amends for the want of such as are truly pleasing and useful every day and hour of our intercourse with each other.

Happiness consists not in some extraordinary instance of good fortune, nor virtue in some illustrious exertion; for such things are in the power of few: but if they are true and genuine, the one must be practised, and the other enjoyed, in the constant and uniform tenor of our lives.

The person who, on some extraordinary occa-

sion, does another some signal piece of service, is by no means so great a benefactor as one who makes his life easy and happy by those pleasing attentions, the single instances of which too often pass unnoticed, but which altogether form the delight of social intercourse, and afford a calm and serene pleasure, without which the most prosperous fortune can never bestow happiness.

There is a security in all our intercourse with persons of this character, which banishes that continual anxiety, and dread of giving offence, which so often throw a restraint on the freedom of conversation.

Such persons wish all mankind to be amiable and happy, and therefore would certainly do their utmost to make them so; and far from taking offence where none was intended, they will be disposed to see all in the most favourable light; and even where they cannot approve, they will never be severe in their censures on any, but always ready to endeavour to bring them back to what is right, with that gentleness and delicacy, which shew it is for their sakes they wish it, and not in resentment of an injury received, or with a view to assume to themselves a superiority over them.

They will make allowance for all the little peculiarities of humour, all the weaknesses, and even the faults, as far as possible, of those with whom they converse, and carefully avoid whatever may tend to irritate and aggravate them; which is

often done by such things as would be trifling and indifferent in other circumstances. This not only has a bad effect, by giving present uneasiness, but serves to strengthen a bad habit; for every fault (particularly a fault of the temper) is increased by exercise: and trifles, which might have been immediately forgotten, are kept up, by being taken notice of, till they become real evils.

They will also carefully avoid exposing peculiarities and weaknesses, and never engage in the cruel sport of what is called "playing off a character," by leading others to betray their own follies, and make themselves ridiculous without suspecting it. Such an amusement is by no means inconsistent with artificial politeness, because the person who suffers by it is not sensible of the injury; but it is directly contrary to that politeness which is true and sincere, because none of the qualities on which it is founded could ever inspire such conduct, or find any gratification in it. On the contrary, they would give a feeling of the injury, of which the person who suffers it is insensible.

There is indeed something particularly ungenerous in this conduct; it is like a robbery committed in breach of trust: and not only the benevolent, but the honest heart must be shocked at it. To say it is deserved, is no excuse: a punishment may often be deserved, but it can never be a pleasure to a benevolent heart to inflict it.

But it is impossible to enter into a particular de-

tail of the conduct which this *sincere* politeness would inspire on every occasion. Its motive remaining always the same, the manner of expressing it will readily be varied as different circumstances may require; it will observe forms, where a neglect of them would give offence; it will be gentle, mild, and unaffected, at all times; compassionate, and tenderly attentive to the afflicted; indulgent to the weak, and ready not only to bear with them without impatience, but to give them all possible assistance. Ever disposed to make the best of all, easy, cheerful, and even playful in familiar intercourse, and on suitable occasions; since, far from being a restraint upon the freedom of society, it is indeed the only way of throwing aside all restraint, without introducing any bad consequences by doing so.

It needs no artifice or disguise; it pursues no sinister aims, no selfish views; but seeks the real good of all, endeavours to express what it feels, and to appear such as it truly is.

How pleasing were general society, if such a disposition prevailed! How delightful all family intercourse, if it were never laid aside! Even friendship itself cannot be completely happy without it;—even real affection will not always supply its place. It is an universal charm, which embellishes every pleasure in social life, prevents numberless uneasinesses and disgusts which so often disturb our peace, and softens those which it

him; with all his roughness, he has a worthy, benevolent heart;—his family and friends must bear with the little peculiarities of his temper, for in essential things he is always ready to do them service, and, I will venture to say, he would bestow his last shilling to assist them in distress. I remember a few weeks ago, I met him on the road in a violent rage with his servant, because he had neglected some trifle he expected him to have done; nothing he did could please him afterwards, and the poor fellow's patience was almost exhausted, so that he was very near giving him warning. Soon after, the servant's horse threw him, and he was very dangerously hurt. Curio immediately ran to him, carried him home in his arms, sent for the best assistance, attended him constantly himself, to see that he wanted for nothing, and paid the whole expense. As the servant has never recovered so far as to be able to do his work as he did before, Curio has taken care to spare him upon every occasion, and has increased his wages, that he may be able to afford the little indulgences he wants."

'How lucky it was,' replied Hilario, 'that the poor fellow happened to meet with this terrible accident, for otherwise he never would have known that he had a good master, but might have gone to his grave with the opinion that he was an ill-natured churl, who cared for nobody but himself. The other day I met one of his nephews, who had just

been at dinner with him; the young fellow was come to town from Cambridge for a few days, and happening unfortunately to be dressed for an assembly, the old gentleman was displeased with his appearance, and began railing at the vices and follies of the age, as if his nephew had been deeply engaged in them, though I believe no one is less inclined to them; but every thing he did or said, was wrong through the whole day, and, as he has really a respect for his uncle, he came away quite dejected and mortified at his treatment of him.'

"And a few days after," replied Alcander, "when that nephew called to take leave of him, he slipt a bank-note of one hundred pounds into his hands at parting, to pay the expenses of his journey, and ran out of the room to avoid receiving his thanks for it."

'So then,' returned Hilario, 'if the young man is of a sordid disposition, and thinks money a better thing than friendship, good humour, and all the amiable qualities which render life agreeable, he has reason to be perfectly satisfied with his uncle; if he is not sordid, the old gentleman has done his part to make him so, by shewing him, that, according to his notions, kindness consists in giving money. For my part, if ever I should be a beggar, or break my bones, I may perhaps be glad to meet with your friend again; but as I hope neither of those things are ever likely to happen to me, I am by no means ambitious of the

honour of his acquaintance—his good qualities are nothing to me, and his bad ones are a plague to all who come in his way.'

"One may bear with them," replied Alcander, "where there is so much real worth: the whole world could not bribe that man to do a base action."

'So much the better for him,' returned Hilario; 'but really, as I said before, it is nothing to me; and after all, whatever excuses your good-nature may find for him, there must be something wrong in the heart, where the manners are so unpleasant.'

"He has not a good temper," said Alcander, "and every man has not the same command over himself; but indeed he has a good heart; and if you knew him as well as I do, you must love him with all his oddities."

'His oddities are quite enough for me,' returned Hilario, 'and I desire to know no more of him; he might make me *esteem* him, but he could never make me *love* him: and it is very unpleasant to feel one of these, where one cannot feel the other.'

Alcander could not but be sensible of the truth of many of Hilario's observations;—he sighed in secret for the friend whose good qualities he valued, and whose foibles gave him pain; and could Curio have known what his friend felt for him at that moment, it might perhaps have gone farther than all he ever read or thought upon the subject, towards correcting a fault, for which he often blam-

ed himself, but which he still continued to indulge, and to imagine himself unable to subdue.

Perhaps neither of the parties concerned in this dispute was well qualified to judge as to the subject of it. Esteem and regard influenced the one, and added strength to his good nature; while the other, whose patience was wearied out by the ill-humour of a stranger, of whose merit he was ignorant, was naturally disposed to view them in an unfavourable light. But such a conversation must induce every indifferent person to reflect on the importance of a quality which could oblige a friend to blush for the person he esteemed, and make an enemy at first sight of one by no means wanting in good nature, who came into company with a disposition to please and to be pleased, and whose disgust was occasioned by a disappointment in that aim.

Can such a quality be a matter of little consequence, which those who are punctual in their duty in more essential points may be permitted to neglect? Can it be a disposition so strongly implanted in the heart of any man, that his utmost effort cannot conquer it?—The first supposition might furnish an excuse for giving way to any fault, since all may fancy they have virtues to counterbalance it. The last would reduce us almost to mere machines, and discourage every effort to reform and improve the heart, without which no real and solid virtue can be attained.

ON FORTITUDE.

True Fortitude is a strength of mind, which cannot be overcome by any trials or any sufferings. It consists not in being insensible of them, for there is no real fortitude in bearing what we do not feel; but it renders us superior to them, and enables us to act as we ought to do in every different situation in life, in every change that can affect our outward circumstances, or our inward feelings.

There is a kind of fortitude which proceeds from natural constitution; some are less affected by trials than others: and some, from strong health and spirits, are able to go through a great deal without sinking under it. But this can only extend to a certain degree. Afflictions may come to such a height, that the most insensible must feel them, and then their apparent fortitude is overcome; and the strongest health and spirits can only resist a little longer than the weakest—they must give way to a sufficient force, and therefore can never be the source of true and constant fortitude.

There is also a kind of fortitude which is called forth into action on particular occasions, and for a time appears superior to the trial; and this may sometimes be inspired even by motives which are in themselves highly blameable. A point in view which is eagerly pursued, will enable a person to

go through what at other times might appear insupportable; but this can only last while the motive remains in force; and those who by this have been rendered equal to what appear to be the greatest trials, have often at other times sunk under the smallest. True fortitude must spring from some principle which is constant and unchangeable, and can support it at all times, and against every attack.

It cannot therefore be derived from any thing in this world. Natural strength must yield to pain and sorrow; earthly considerations can support us no farther than their immediate influence extends: —pride cannot enable us to bear humiliations, or even those little mortifications which daily occur, when there is no credit to be gained by doing so; and philosophy must at last be reduced to nothing more than suppressing complaints, and making the best of what it cannot cure. These may inspire a strength which will last for a time—a strength which may serve for certain occasions, but will fail on others; or an appearance of strength to conceal our weakness. But none of these can inspire that fortitude which is a constant, invariable disposition of mind, prepared for every trial, and superior to them all. This can only be derived from a confidence in that assistance which can never fail; from a motive for action which is sufficient to carry us through every trial; and from hopes which nothing in this world can take away.

The effect of this fortitude is, that it makes us

steadily and constantly pursue the great aim we have in view; it is drawn aside by no pleasure; it shrinks at no difficulty; it sinks under no affliction; but resolutely goes on, whatever may be the path assigned, and though it may suffer, it never yields.

This virtue is exercised, not only in the greatest afflictions, but in the daily occurrences of life; and if in these its trials are not so painful, yet they may perhaps often be more difficult. It enables us to bear the faults and weaknesses of others, the disappointments and humiliations which all must meet with, and the numberless little vexations and inconveniences, which, though when considered separately they may appear trifling, yet often affect the temper much more than we are aware of.

It is also exercised by our own weaknesses and imperfections; for there is no person living who can always preserve the same equal state of mind and spirits: and it is no inconsiderable part of true fortitude to avoid giving way to what none can avoid feeling, and to persevere in acting as we ought in every different disposition of mind.

This then is the great and distinguishing character of true fortitude;—that it is constant and invariable, the same at all times, in all trials, and in all dispositions; it depends not on the circumstances in which we may be placed, nor on the strength either of body or spirit which we may enjoy, but it enables us to exert all the strength we possess,

which is often much more than we imagine; it is seated in the will, and never gives way in any instance.

Without this virtue, there can be no dependence on any other. Those who have the best inclinations in the world, must find a time of difficulty; a time when, from the opposition they may meet with, or from their own weakness, the performance of their duty must require no small degree of exertion; and if they have not fortitude to go on, in spite of all such difficulties, their former good dispositions and good actions will be of little use.

The practice of virtue is indeed often attended with applause sufficient to animate vanity to assume the appearance of it; and even where it is pure and genuine, the esteem and affection engaged by it cannot but be highly pleasing to all, and must afford some degree of assistance and support. But there are many instances in which all these supports are entirely wanting; and true fortitude will enable us to act as we ought to do, without any such assistance, and even when we are sure that the consequences of doing so will be directly contrary to all this.

It can bear not only the want of approbation, but the mortification of being slighted or blamed, and persevere, whatever may be the consequence in regard to this world: not from a contempt for the opinions of others, for it does not hinder such humiliations from being felt, but it supports them

with courage and resolution, and will never endeavour to avoid them by the slightest deviation from the right path, or to return them by a display of its superiority, or by giving any degree of pain or humiliation to those from whom they came. Far from being a stern or rugged quality, it is indispensably necessary to support that gentleness and sweetness of disposition, which form the charm of social life, and which can never be long preserved by those who have not fortitude to bear the vexations they must often meet with from the weaknesses and inadvertencies, and even from the pride and ill-temper, of those with whom they converse. That *spirit*, (as it is commonly called,) which immediately resents every trifling injury, and endeavours to return it, is, in fact, a weakness—a proof of being unable to bear it. True fortitude can conquer it: and without this, no apparent gentleness of character can ever be depended on, since it will only last till there is sufficient provocation to get the better of it.

To the want of this kind of fortitude, much of the unhappiness of society is owing. A trifle gives offence, and is resented; we cannot bear a little mortification, or humiliation; or, perhaps, we cannot bear to appear to want spirit to resent such things, and do ourselves justice. True fortitude can bear all these, whenever it is our duty to do so; but few consider the importance of exerting it on such occasions.

It enables us to acknowledge our errors and our faults, instead of having recourse to any artifice or misrepresentation to disguise or justify what the heart in secret disapproves, or must disapprove on a fair and impartial consideration; to which want of fortitude to bear the mortifying view of our own imperfections is often one of the greatest hindrances.

In great afflictions fortitude is exerted not only in suppressing complaints and murmurs, but in rendering us superior to them, by enabling us to take an enlarged view of things; to consider the hand from which they come, and the advantages which may be derived from them; and it inspires not merely a tame submission, but an active resolution, which in every trial exerts its utmost powers, and excites us to do the best we can, whatever that may be, and whatever struggle such exertion may cost us.

In short, it enables us to make the best of every thing, to pursue steadily and constantly the path of duty, unmoved by all the attacks of pleasure or of pain, and unwearied by the most tedious and apparently unsuccessful exertions, notwithstanding any difficulty which may attend it, or any consequence which may follow from it.

In order to obtain this fortitude, we cannot but be sensible, that a strength superior to our own is necessary; the experience of every day must shew us our weakness, and the insufficiency of those

supports which any thing in this world can afford us. But the Word of Eternal Truth has promised us a help which shall never fail those who sincerely seek for it: for this then we must apply by constant prayer, not only in general, but in every particular instance. But we must not suppose that this help can be obtained without exerting our own endeavours; we must do our best, and in so doing, we may securely depend upon it in every trial that can come upon us.

Too great a confidence in our own strength is directly contrary to true fortitude, and generally leads to a defeat; but we should also be cautious that we do not run into another extreme, and give way to such a degree of diffidence as may hinder us from exerting ourselves, or give the name of diffidence to real indolence.

The consciousness of our own weakness should, indeed, induce us to seek a more powerful assistance, but our endeavours are necessary to obtain it; and neither the presumptuous, nor the indolent, have any right to hope for it.

Let us then exert ourselves on every occasion, and never give way in the smallest instance, if we mean to be steady in the greatest. Let us endeavour to impress upon our minds the importance of the objects we have in view—the favour of GOD, and our own eternal happiness; we shall then have motives for action continually before us, sufficient to support us in the greatest difficulties, to arm us

against the severest shocks of affliction, and enable us to endure the longest course of suffering to which human life is liable.

Is it possible we should sink under the humiliation we may meet with from this world, while we may hope for the approbation of GOD himself? Can we not suffer transitory affliction, with the prospect of endless felicity before us?—It is for want of attending sufficiently to these things, that present trials appear to us so insupportable; and the only effectual preparation for these trials is, to arm ourselves with comforts which they cannot take away, and motives for action which may be sufficient to carry us through them with resolution and vigour.

When we look into the Holy Scriptures, we find the Christian life continually represented as a state of warfare, in which we are called to contend with the temptations of this world, and with our own perverse inclinations. We must deny ourselves, and take up the cross, if we would be the disciples of CHRIST; we must conquer, if we would obtain the crown;—we must lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race that is set before us;—we must endure unto the end, if we hope to be saved.

Such is the account given us of the state to which we are called, and such a prospect must strongly impress upon our minds the necessity of arming ourselves with true fortitude;—of being

stedfast, immoveable, while we have the most powerful and comfortable motives to induce us to be so;—forasmuch as we *know* that "our labour is not vain in the LORD." We know that we shall conquer, if we faint not; that if we are faithful unto death, He will give us a crown of life—a happiness beyond what the eye hath seen, or the ear heard, or the heart of man is able to conceive.

Such a view of the Christian state must shew us, in a strong light, the nature of that fortitude that is required, in order to enable us to perform our part in it. Human motives may inspire occasional exertions which excite admiration; but those instances of fortitude which are most admired, are seldom, in reality, such as are most difficult; and the true Christian must be armed with a fortitude far superior to that which is displayed on such occasions; a fortitude which requires no earthly support; which aims at no present reward; which resists pleasure and pain, humiliation and weariness; which is the same at all times, and can always obtain the most difficult of all conquests—that which is gained over our own inclinations.

The person who sacrifices pleasure to ambition, convenience to avarice, or any present indulgence to pride, or some other predominant passion, may appear to act with fortitude in many instances, when, in fact, his conduct is directly contrary to it; since he only gives way to a darling inclination, and pursues the means of gratifying it; and should

a trial come which required the sacrifice of that inclination, his imaginary fortitude must fail.

But the fortitude of the true Christian is prepared for every thing; like all his other virtues, it is not the occasional exertion of a moment, but the constant disposition of his mind. It is also, like all other virtues, never perfectly known, but by endeavouring to practice it. All are sensible that it is necessary in pain and afflictions: few consider sufficiently how often it is necessary even in the most ordinary occurrences—the most trifling conversations.

How often are the real sentiments disguised, the innocent injured, and false maxims suffered to gain ground, merely for want of resolution to resist the torrent, from a fear of being singular, or of losing any share in the good opinion of others by opposing their sentiments! And thus the cause of truth and goodness is betrayed, and often suffers as much from timid friends as from real enemies; for conversation will influence the character and conduct: by degrees the mind grows familiar with what once it disapproved, and learns to believe what has been frequently repeated, and suffered to pass unnoticed, till that delicacy, which was shocked at the least appearance of any thing wrong, is insensibly worn away.

Wrong opinions mislead the practice, and uncharitable ones corrupt the heart; but those exertions which true fortitude inspires, should at the

same time be carefully distinguished from that positiveness and love of contradicting which so often disturb the peace and pleasure of society, and which (even when they happen to be exerted in a good cause) frequently do a real injury to what they mean to defend.

The person who feels pain in opposing the opinions and inclinations of others, and does it merely from a sense of duty, will always endeavour to avoid giving pain by doing so; but a gentleness and timidity of disposition, and an earnest desire to please, are qualities which may lead to excesses, as well as the contrary; and true fortitude requires the sacrifice of our inclinations, whenever our duty makes it necessary.

It is impossible to enumerate the various instances in which fortitude is necessary in the daily occurrences of life. A careful attention to our own conduct, and a candid inquiry into the motives of it, will be the surest means to point out to us wherein we are wanting, and to give us a just notion of that fortitude which is necessary to support us on every different occasion.

Let us then examine our own hearts, and inquire whether the fear of displeasing others does not sometimes induce us to disguise our real sentiments, and appear to approve what in our hearts we condemn?—Whether we are not sometimes positive, because we cannot bear to own ourselves in the wrong; or complying, because we dread being

thought so? Whether we do not sometimes give a sanction to uncertain suspicions, or ill-natured ridicule, from a fear of being thought to possess less penetration than others, or from the apprehension of exposing ourselves to the like, if we should venture to oppose them?—In short, whether we are never induced by fear, either to speak, or to be silent, when our own unprejudiced judgment would have led us to do otherwise? If so, we are in that instance wanting in true fortitude; nor is the want of it less evident in giving way to our own faults and weaknesses than to those of others.

Can we subdue our pride, anger, or fretfulness, all the passions which are so often excited by trifles in common life, and which, on such occasions, are in general too easily suffered to take their course without resistance? Do we not rather sometimes give way to them, for want of resolution to endeavour to suppress them; or from a fear of being despised for our insensibility, or our tameness, if we should suffer any injury to pass unnoticed? Can we bear the various kinds of mortifications we may meet with from others, without endeavouring to return them; and submit even to unjust censure, when charity or any other duty requires our doing so? Can we sacrifice our inclinations to those of others, with cheerfulness and good-humour, without telling the world that we are doing so, and endeavouring to exalt ourselves at the expense of those we pretend to oblige, and to gain admiration to sup-

port and reward us? Can we bear the follies and weaknesses of those with whom we converse, and the many little circumstances which often render society tiresome to us, without giving pain by shewing that it is so? And do we endeavour, by every gentle and engaging method, not only to make others easy and happy, but to win them over to all that is amiable and good, and help them to amend those imperfections which we cannot help observing, without exposing them to the humiliation of knowing that we are sensible of them?——The good that may be done in this way is seldom attended to as it deserves; but such endeavours require no small degree of fortitude, since their success must, in general, be attained by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, and often remains entirely unknown; and far from being attended with any admiration, they will, for the most part, pass unnoticed—perhaps often be totally misinterpreted.

These are but few of the numberless occasions on which true fortitude is necessary in common life. A little attention to the circumstances which daily occur, will point out to us many more, on which it may be highly useful to inquire into the motives of our conduct; and such inquiries will often shew, that want of fortitude is in reality the source of many faults and imperfections, which are too generally overlooked, or ascribed to some other cause.

How happy then is the situation of him who is armed with that true and constant fortitude, which rests with full confidence on Almighty Power, and is supported by it in every trial;—who is thus prepared for all events, and able not only to *suffer*, but to *act* as he ought, in every situation;—who can bear with the same resolution those severe shocks which at once destroy his earthly happiness, and those little mortifications which continually alloy it;—who never can be deterred from the path of duty, either by the allurements of pleasure, the dread of sufferings, the weariness and disgust which attend on long-continued trials, or the discouragement of repeated disappointments.

The nerves may tremble at the approach of pain —the spirits may sink beneath a load of grief—but the resolution remains unmoved; and pain or affliction, however strongly felt, are boldly encountered, whenever they are inflicted by the dispensations of Providence, or when the consideration of duty makes it necessary voluntarily to endure them.—This alone is true Christian fortitude;—a fortitude far superior to that which in many striking instances has engaged the admiration of mankind: and this is necessary to all who wish to attain that perfection to which we are called.

ON CANDOUR.

THERE are many people who take the measure of a character like the taylor in Laputa, who, in order to make a suit of clothes for Gulliver, took the size of his thumb, and concluded that the rest was in proportion: they form their judgment from some slight circumstance, and conclude that the rest of the character must be of a piece with it.

Were all bodies formed according to the exact rules of proportion, this method of taking their measure would be infallible, supposing the taylor perfectly acquainted with those rules; but in order to find the same certainty in this method of judging of characters, we must not only suppose that the person who is to judge of them is equally well informed of all their different variations; but we must also suppose that the same motives regularly produce the same actions, and that the same feelings are always expressed in the same manner. A very little observation is sufficient to shew that this is far from being the case.

Human nature, it is said, is always the same. But what is human nature?—and who could ever enumerate all its various powers, inclinations, affections, and passions, with all the different effects they may produce by their different combinations; the objects on which they may be employed, and

the variety of circumstances which may attend them?

This leaves a wide field for imagination to exert itself. But attention and observation might serve to make us diffident of our own judgment; and as it is much easier, as well as more flattering to vanity, to judge from a first impression, than from reason and reflection, a favourable or unfavourable prejudice is apt to take the lead in the opinion formed of the actions of those about whom we are much interested. Where this is not the case, most people measure by a certain line of their own, beyond which they know not how to go; and when they meet with refinements of which they are incapable, they can form no idea of them in another; and therefore, by assigning some other motive to such actions, they reduce them to their own standard; and being then able to comprehend what was unintelligible before, they conclude that their present opinion must certainly be right, and form their judgment of the rest of the character according to it.

From these and many other causes which might be assigned, it appears, that there must always be great uncertainty in the opinion we form of the actions of others, and in the inferences we draw from particular actions concerning the general character. The obvious conclusion from which is, that we should be always upon our guard against forming an hasty judgment, or laying too much

stress upon those judgments which we cannot help forming; and be very cautious that we do not suffer our own prejudices and fancies to acquire the force of truth, and influence our opinions afterwards.

Yet still, while we live in this world, and converse with others, it is impossible to avoid forming some opinion of them from their words and actions; and it is not always easy to ascertain the just bounds within which this opinion ought to be confined; and to distinguish between the dictates of reason, and those of prejudice and imagination.

Since then we cannot shut our eyes, it may be useful to us to procure as much light as we can; not that we may be continually prying into what does not concern us, but that where we cannot avoid forming some judgment, we may do it with justice and candour; that we may learn to avoid being positive, where we must be uncertain; and to see and confess our error, where we may have been wrong.

A benevolent heart, ever desirous of considering the actions of others in the most favourable light, will indeed be less liable than any other to the bad consequences which may follow from the difficulties attending on our judgment of others; for an error on the favourable side is far less pernicious to them or to ourselves, than the contrary would be; yet every error is liable to bad consequences. The person who has formed a hasty favourable judg-

ment, may probably in time be convinced of his mistake: having been deceived, he may grow suspicious, till every appearance of good is mistrusted, and he falls by degrees into the opposite extreme; for error cannot be the foundation of real and lasting good, since, sooner or later, it must be shaken; and then the superstructure, however beautiful in appearance, will fall to ruins.

True charity and benevolence certainly do not consist in deceiving ourselves or others: they do not make us blind and insensible, nor do they give a false light to lead us astray from the truth, and then leave us bewildered in darkness and error, seeking in vain to return, and mistrusting every appearance of light which would conduct us back again. Like all other virtues, they flow from the source of eternal truth, they must be firmly rooted in the heart, and continually exercised in every different situation, not merely the transient effects of good spirits and good-humour, which sometimes make a person disposed to be pleased with others, only because he is pleased with himself; for then he will be displeased again with as little reason, whenever the present humour gives place to another. Still less are they the effect of weakness of judgment, and want of discernment and penetration: which in fact are more likely to lead to the contrary extreme.—That they are sometimes considered in this last point of view, may perhaps be one of the chief reasons for that want of them, which so often appears in general conversation.

The vanity of displaying superior talents is very prevalent, and it is often much more from this principle, than from real ill-nature, that the faults and imperfections of the absent are exposed. To gain admiration is the object of pursuit: any other way by which it might be attained, would answer the purpose just as well; but unfortunately all others are most difficult, while this is within the reach of all: for the weakest have penetration enough to discover imperfections in those whose excellencies are far above their comprehension.

Those who have no solid virtues of their own, may assume a temporary superiority, by declaiming against the faults of others; and those who have neither wit, nor any talents to amuse, may yet raise a laugh by exposing what is ridiculous, or may be made to appear so. A little more of that penetration which they are so desirous of being thought to possess, might help them to a farther insight into themselves and others; they might perhaps find that they have only been exposing what was obvious to every body, and gaining the reputation of ill-nature, in fact without deserving it (any otherwise than by inattention); for admiration was their point in view, and it is very possible that the consequences of what they said, might never enter their thoughts, and that they would have been really shocked, had they considered them in their true light. But raising themselves, not depreciating others, was the object of their pursuit; and the

means of attaining it were considered merely as such, without any attention to their consequences.

Perhaps some rigid censor, who heard the conversation, may fall into an error of the same kind with their own; and, for want of sufficiently penetrating their motives, may suppose them lost to all sense of candour and benevolence, and actuated solely by malice and ill-nature; while a person of real discernment would have avoided the errors of both; and not from weakness, but from strength of judgment, would have acted a more charitable part; for nothing is more just than the observation of an excellent author, *Ce n'est point au depens de l'esprit qu'on est bon.* The faults and follies are often the most obvious parts of a character, while many good qualities remain unnoticed by the generality of the world, unless some extraordinary occasion call them forth to action.

It is wonderful to observe, how many unfavourable and unjust opinions are formed, merely by not sufficiently considering the very different lights in which the same action will appear to different persons and on different occasions. How many things are said in general conversation, from thoughtlessness and inattention, from a flow of spirits, and a desire to say something, which will not stand the test of a severe censure; and which, considered separately, may appear in such a light as the speaker never thought of! Not only the ill-natured, but the superficial observer may often be misled

by such appearances, and shocked at things which want only to be understood in order to secure them a more favourable judgment.

The disposition of the hearer, as well as that of the speaker, may also contribute greatly to make things appear different from what they really are; and great allowances should be made for his own passions and prejudices, as well as for those of others: for though they may be supposed to be better known to him, yet it is evident that every one, while under their immediate influence, is very ill qualified to judge how far they may affect his opinions.

A person who is under any particular dejection of spirits, and feels that a kind word or look would be a cordial to his heart, may be overcome by the mirth of a cheerful society, and incline to attribute to insensibility what perhaps was merely owing to ignorance of his situation, and the lively impression of present pleasure: while another, whose heart is elated by some little success which his imagination has raised far above its real value, may be shocked at the coolness of those, who, being more rational and less interested, see the matter in its true light, and therefore cannot share in his joy in the manner he expects and wishes.

What multitudes of unfavourable and unjust opinions would be at once removed, if we could put ourselves in the place of others, and see things in the light in which they appear to them, the only

way of forming a right estimate of their conduct. But while we judge of the actions of others by our own feelings, or rather by our own reasonings upon what we choose to suppose would be our feelings on the like occasion, we must be liable to continual mistakes.

To feel for others is a quality generally claimed by all, and which certainly in some degree seems to be implanted in human nature. They must be insensible indeed, or something far worse, who can see others happy, without being pleased; or miserable, without sympathising in their sufferings, and wishing to relieve them. But to enter fully into the feelings of others, to be truly sensible of the impression every circumstance makes in their situation, is much more difficult and more uncommon, than at first sight may appear; and yet, unless we could do this, there must always be great uncertainty in our opinions of their conduct: and it may afford no small satisfaction to a person of true benevolence, when he feels the pain of being obliged to think unfavourably of another, to consider at the same time, that if he knew all, he might find many reasons to abate the severity of the censure which he hears pronounced by others, and to which he is unable to give a satisfactory answer, because, according to appearances, it seems to have been deserved.

Most people act much more from their feelings, than from reason and reflection;—those who con-

sider coolly of circumstances in which they are no way interested, may lay a plan of conduct which may appear to them so rational and natural, that they wonder how any one could miss it; while those who are engaged in action, are often hurried on by the impulse of the present moment, and, without having any bad intention, may fall into such errors as the cool reasoner would think almost impossible; or perhaps sometimes, without considering the matter, they may rise to heights of excellence which would never have occurred to him, and which, for that reason, he may probably be unable to comprehend, and therefore very liable to misinterpret, and so be induced to blame what is really deserving of commendation.

It may generally be observed, that in every science a slight and superficial knowledge makes a person vain and positive; while long and attentive study, and a deep insight into the real nature of things, produce a contrary effect, and lead to humility and diffidence. This may be partly owing to that desire of displaying what they possess, which is often found in those who possess but little, and are therefore ambitious of making the most of it, in order to impose upon the world by false appearances, and prevent a discovery of that poverty which they wish to conceal; but it is also often owing to a real misapprehension of things.

The superficial observer considers the object only in one point of view, which perhaps is new to

him, and therefore strikes his imagination strongly; and it does not occur to him that it may be considered in other lights, and that, upon farther inquiry, he might find reason to change his opinion, or at least to doubt of what at first appeared to him clear and evident. Pleased with what he has acquired, and ignorant of what farther might be acquired, he is satisfied and positive: while those who are farther advanced, see a vast field of knowledge open before them, of which they are sensible that they can explore only a very small part; and by taking an enlarged view of things, and observing how often they have been deceived by considering them in a false light, are taught to avoid being positive, where they are sensible their knowledge is imperfect.

This may be applied to the study of the human heart, as well as to every other, in which we can only judge from appearances. Those who know least are often most ready to decide, and most positive in their decisions; and positiveness generally gains more credit than it deserves. The consequences of this are perhaps more pernicious in regard to this subject than any other, because it requires much less penetration to discover faults and weaknesses, than real and solid good qualities. From hence may appear the injustice of supposing, that persons of deep knowledge and observation of mankind are to be avoided, as being inclined to pass the severest judgments on the conduct of oth-

ers. These indeed who harbour any criminal designs, and conceal vice under the mask of hypocrisy, may tremble under the eye of a keen observer: for such an one may see through their deepest disguises, and expose them in their true light when it is necessary, in order to prevent the mischief they might do. He may also detect the fallacy of assumed merit, and false virtue, which have passed upon the world for real; but he will see at the same time the allowances which candour may make for every fault and weakness. He will discover many an humble excellence which seeks not to display itself to the world, and many an instance of true goodness of heart, and delicacy of sentiment, expressed in trifling circumstances, which would pass unnoticed, or perhaps be totally misinterpreted, by a person of less observation and knowledge of mankind. He will also be more open to conviction, and ready to acknowledge a mistake, because he is not under the necessity of endeavouring to impose upon the world by a false appearance of knowledge, which always indicates a deficiency in what is true and genuine.

Ignorance alone pretends to infallibility. A person of real knowledge is sensible that he must be liable to error, and has not the same reason to be afraid of acknowledging it in any particular instance; and if his knowledge be joined with true benevolence, he will be continually watching for an opportunity to change his opinion, if that opi-

nion has been formed on the unfavourable side, or at least to discover some good qualities which may counterbalance the fault he could not help observing. For the same reasons he will be always ready and willing to observe an alteration for the better in those of whom he has thought most unfavourably, instead of being glad (as is sometimes the case with others) of any new instance which may serve to confirm the opinion formerly pronounced, and afraid of any thing which may contradict it. He will always remember, that the worst character may improve; and the severest judgments ever pronounced by the ignorant and ill-natured, even those which have been assented to with regret by the sensible and benevolent, may afterwards be changed: but the first will be afraid and unwilling to acknowledge that they have been obliged to change their opinion; the last will be ever ready to do it, and not ashamed to own it, when they can observe a change of conduct.

Knowledge is indeed quick-sighted, but ignorance is improperly represented as being blind: it rather furnishes a false light, which leads to a thousand errors and mistakes. The difference between them does not consist in the number of their observations, but in the truth and justness of them. Penetration may discover those faults and weaknesses, which really exist, but ignorance will fancy it has discovered many which never existed at all;

and it is difficult indeed to convince ignorance of a mistake.

It may also be observed, that those qualities which dispose us to make a right use of the knowledge of mankind, contribute at the same time to increase that knowledge.

The heart which is merely selfish does not understand the language of benevolence, disinterestedness. and generosity, and therefore is very liable to misinterpret it; while those who feel themselves capable of great and worthy actions, will find no difficulty in believing that others may be so too, and will have an idea of a character which can hardly ever be perfectly understood by those who feel nothing like it in themselves.

Vice, even in spite of itself, must pay a reverence to virtue, considered in general; but the most exalted heights and most refined instances of it are far above its comprehension.

This observation holds not only in regard to such characters as are entirely abandoned to vice, but to all who are tainted with the lesser degrees of it: which always, more or less, tend to inspire suspicion, and make it difficult to understand an opposite character, or believe it to be such as to an honest and good heart it would immediately appear.

It is impossible to read or hear the observations of those who are celebrated for the deepest knowledge of mankind, without being hurt to observe,

that vice and folly, with the means of playing upon them, and making advantage of them, are made the general objects of attention; while true goodness of heart, and rectitude of character, are hardly ever mentioned. And yet if such things do exist, (and what must his heart be who believes they do not?) he who leaves them entirely out in his account, must have but an imperfect knowledge of mankind.

Another way in which a slight and superficial observation of mankind is very apt to mislead, is that love of reducing every thing to general rules, which is always found in those whose views are not very extensive. A few such rules are easily remembered; and they have an appearance of conveying a great deal of knowledge at once, which often procures them a favourable reception, not only from those who are desirous of concealing their ignorance under an appearance of knowledge, but even from such as might be capable of detecting their fallacy, if they would give themselves the trouble of examining them.

To say that all men act from pride, or self-interest, and then to explain every action accordingly, is much easier than to trace the motives of different actions in different characters, and discover the various sources from whence they spring; and much more flattering to vanity, than to acknowledge ourselves unable to explain them.

A general rule, which has been found to answer

in some instances, is a most valuable acquisition to those who talk more than they think, and are more desirous of the appearance of knowledge and penetration than of the reality; and such rules are often repeated from one to another, without being sufficiently examined, till they gain the force of truth, and are received as maxims, which it would be thought unreasonable to controvert.

The necessity of using metaphorical language to express the sentiments of the heart, may perhaps often have given occasion to mistakes of this kind; the qualities which belong to the literal sense of the word, are applied to it when used metaphorically; and from a habit of connecting the word with those qualities, such reasonings often pass current, though a little attention might easily have discovered the mistake on which they are founded. This is still more likely to happen when the same metaphor is used to express different sentiments, which, from the poverty of language on such subjects, must sometimes happen.

The words *warmth* and *heat*, (for example,) originally denoting the properties of fire, have been metaphorically used to express those of affection, and those of anger or resentment. This circumstance alone has probably given rise to an observation often repeated, and very generally received, "that a warm friend will be equally warm in his anger and resentment, and consequently will be a bitter enemy." It would be just as rational to say,

"he will burn your fingers;" for it is only from reasoning upon words without ideas, that either the one or the other can be asserted.

That tender, affectionate disposition, which constitutes the character of a warm friend, and disposes him even to forget himself for the sake of the object beloved, is not more different from the qualities of natural fire, than from that proud and selfish spirit which inspires violent anger and resentment. To the first, (according to the expression of an elegant writer,) *la haine seroit un tourment;* but the last finds his satisfaction (if that word can ever be applied to such a character) in the indulgence of his hatred, and the endeavour to express it.

A very little attention to the real qualities of these characters might surely be sufficient to shew that they are widely different; though the habit of using the same words to express them has led to an habitual connexion of the ideas, and prevents this difference from striking us at first sight.

The same would be found to be the case in many other instances, where general observations have been received, merely because they sound plausibly, and are repeated so often that they are believed of course, without inquiring into the truth and justice of them. And when such are made the ground-work of the judgments formed in particular instances, those judgments must be liable to numberless errors, which will easily gain credit, because they favour a received opinion.

That this method of judging by general rules, on subjects so various and complicated as the disposition of the human heart, is very liable to error, should alone be sufficient to put us on our guard against it: but there is an additional reason for this, from the probability that they may be founded on observations drawn from the most unfavourable view of human nature; the effects of bad qualities being, in general, more extensive and more apparent, than those of good ones; since the latter are frequently employed in preventing mischief, and then they are scarce ever taken notice of. They also make the deepest impression; for all are sensible of the evils they have suffered; few pay sufficient attention to those they have escaped. A single fault may disturb the peace of society, and be observed and condemned by all, while steady and uniform good conduct seldom engages any particular attention, or meets with that applause which it deserves.

Whenever, therefore, the application of a general rule disposes us to an unfavourable judgment in any particular instance, that circumstance should render it suspected, and make us less ready to admit the conclusion which may be drawn from it.

This again may serve to shew, that persons of enlarged views and extensive knowledge are far from being on that account disposed to be severe; but on the contrary, if they make a right use of

them, will thereby be enabled to correct the errors of others, and be led to a more candid and liberal way of judging than the rest of the world.

They cannot indeed retain that disposition to think well of every body, which is sometimes found in those who are just entering into life, and know not how to suspect any insincerity in words, or bad design in actions: this belongs only to youth and inexperience, and therefore cannot last long in any one. A little knowledge of mankind must destroy the pleasing illusion, and shew a world far different from what the imagination of an innocent and benevolent heart had represented it.

Such a discovery is unavoidable. That there are vices and follies in the world, must be evident to all who are not quite strangers to it; and there can be no dependence on a favourable opinion, founded on ignorance, and which time must destroy. It is when this ignorance is dispelled, (as it must be,) that the prospect of the world is open before us, and opinions are formed upon observation; and then the worst parts of it, the consequences attending on vice and folly, are in general most exposed to view, while a greater degree of attention and penetration is necessary, to discover the humble excellence and secret influence of virtue; to convince us that actions are often far different from what they appear to be, that our judgments of them must always be uncertain, and that therefore reason and justice require us to be very

diffident of them; while candour teaches us to make every allowance which the circumstances of the case (according to the best view we are able to take) can admit: and charity gladly cherishes the hope that we might find reason for many more, if we were able to look into the heart.

But while we admire this candid and liberal way of judging, which belongs to an enlarged mind and a benevolent heart, we should at the same time be careful not to confound it with a false kind of benevolence, which sometimes assumes the appearance of the true, and tends to produce very pernicious effects. This is when *faults*, not *persons*, are made the objects of what is called good-nature; and excuses are found for them, (considered in themselves,) not for the persons who are, or appear to be, guilty of them.

To justify or even palliate vice, is inconsistent with truth, and beneath the dignity of virtue; and therefore can never belong to real candour, which is exercised on the circumstances of the person, not on the crime itself.

It is by no means improbable, that many may have fallen into errors of this kind with very good intentions, deceived by an appearance of indulgence towards others, which gratifies their good-nature; but such should remember, that whatever tends to lessen the horror of vice, must be a general injury to all mankind, for which no advantage to particular persons can make amends; and perhaps few

are sufficiently sensible, how greatly the progress of vice is promoted by the softening terms so generally used in speaking of it, and the favourable light in which it is so often represented. By such means the mind by degrees grows familiar with what it would have considered as an object of detestation, had it been shewn in its true colours; and none can say how far the consequences of this may extend.

Others again are led into this way of judging by their own interest, and are glad to find excuses for what they are conscious of in themselves, and to shelter their self-indulgence under a pretence of indulgence towards others. It is even possible that they may impose upon themselves, as well as the world, by this method of proceeding; and may persuade themselves that the favourable judgment they pronounce on their neighbours, is really the effect of true benevolence.

Self-indulgence is not the only bad effect which is likely to follow from hence; for others, who observe their sentiments and conduct, and are sensible of the bad consequences they are likely to produce, may from thence be disposed to run into a contrary extreme, and to believe that a superior regard to virtue is shewn, by being very severe in their censures upon the conduct of others, and condemning without mercy all those who appear to be in any degree blameworthy.

But it should always be carefully observed, as a

great and discriminating character of true candour, by which it may be distinguished from all false pretences, that the motives by which it teaches us to be indulgent towards others, are such as cannot have that effect when applied to ourselves, if we should ever indulge ourselves in those faults which we condemn in others.

We cannot see their hearts, and know their motives, and it is very possible that many an action which is generally condemned, might, if all the circumstances were known, appear to be really deserving of commendation. Perhaps they could explain it, and clear themselves from the blame thrown on them, but are restrained from doing it by consideration for others, or some other good and charitable motive, which makes them willingly submit to the censure they might avoid, and dare to do right not only without the support of that approbation which should be the consequence of it, but even when they know it will expose them to the contrary.

Perhaps from real and unavoidable ignorance of circumstances which are known to us, they may have been induced to consider the matter in a very different light, and with very good intentions may have done what appears to us unjustifiable.

From such considerations as these, it will often appear, that what would be a fault in our situation and circumstances, is really far otherwise in those of others, or at least may be so, for aught we can possibly know to the contrary.

But even where there is no room for any considerations of this sort, and where we cannot doubt that what we condemn was really a fault, still the case is widely different between the faults of others and our own. Their error might proceed from ignorance, prejudice, misapprehension, and many other causes, which he who condemns it can never plead in his own excuse, if he should be guilty of the like. They may have been hurried on to act without reflection; but he who observes and censures their conduct, cannot pretend that this is the case with him. They may not have been aware of the consequences which would attend their actions; but he who sees them, and condemns the cause of them, may surely be upon his guard. After the greatest faults, and the longest deviations from what is right, they may become sensible of their errors, and reform their lives; but he who dares wilfully to indulge himself even in the smallest fault, with a view to this, will find his task become continually more and more difficult, and has little reason to expect that he shall ever accomplish it.

Thus reason and justice teach us to be candid, by shewing us how very uncertain our judgments on the actions of others must always be; and how many circumstances, with which we cannot possibly be fully acquainted, may contribute to alleviate their faults, though they cannot have that effect in regard to our own. They teach us to

check that pride which would decide upon every thing, and exalt ourselves at the expense of others; to be sensible that there are many things of which we cannot judge; and to acknowledge that the smallest deviation from what is right is inexcusable in ourselves, though the greatest (for aught we know) may admit of many excuses in the case of others.

But true charity goes farther still. It shews us in all mankind our brethren and fellow-creatures, for whom we should be sincerely and affectionately interested. It teaches us to grieve for their faults, as well as for their sufferings; and earnestly to wish their welfare, and endeavour to promote it.

He who sees the faults of others with real concern, will not be inclined to aggravate them; nor can he delight to dwell upon them, or wish to expose them.

He who enjoys all the good he sees, will naturally wish to see all in the most favourable light, and that *wish* will contribute greatly to enable him to do so. It will extend even to those by whose faults he is himself a sufferer; far from being desirous of revenge, he will grieve for the offender, in this case, as in every other, and endeavour by the gentlest means to bring him back to what is right.

Our passions may oppose what reason and judgment approve: and, without being able to silence them, may yet often prove too strong for them: but that charity which religion inspires, must be

firmly rooted in the heart. It exalts the affections to the highest object, and subdues the excesses of passion by nobler and stronger inclinations. It extends its influence over the whole character, and is expressed in the most trifling conversation as well as in the most important actions. It is the source of all those dispositions which are most amiable and pleasing in society, which contribute most to the happiness of ourselves and others here, and which will make us infinitely happy hereafter.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF AFFLICTION.

It is the advice of the Wise Man, "In the day of adversity *consider*;" and it may well be reckoned one of the advantages attending on the afflictions we meet with in this life, that they call off our attention from the too eager pursuit of business or pleasure, and force us for a time to turn our thoughts another way.—When the disappointment of some hope we eagerly pursued, or the loss of some blessing we highly valued, has deeply impressed upon our mind the sense of our own weakness, and of the uncertainty of every earthly joy; then surely the importance of some never-failing support, some durable felicity, must strike us in the strongest

light. Then, if ever, it behoves us to look into our hearts, to recall them from those transitory pleasures to which they were too much attached, and endeavour to fix them on hopes which are not liable to disappointment, and joys which nothing in this world can take away; and to discover and pursue those means by which we may obtain a rational and well-grounded enjoyment of such hopes, and be prepared for such felicity.

Those who enjoy a large portion of the good things of this life, will often find it very difficult to avoid growing too much attached to them, and (at least in some degree) inattentive, perhaps even indifferent, in regard to a future state. To such, it is evident, the stroke which calls them back, however severe, is indeed a blessing, if received as it ought to be. But those who are placed in a different situation, may sometimes stand no less in need of such a monitor; their pleasures being fewer, they may learn to set a higher value upon them; and feeling continually the want of comfort and support, they may be apt to rest too much on such as are afforded them, and forget where alone they must seek for true and lasting comfort.

Present objects make a strong impression; and even those who appear to have the least reason to be attached to this world, may yet stand in need of some powerful call to awaken their attention, and raise their thoughts to a better. But no affliction can have this effect, if we immediately fly to

pleasure and dissipation, and endeavour by such means to drive it from our thoughts, and render ourselves insensible to it. This method may perhaps succeed in some degree, or appear to do so for a time; but the affliction must be trifling, or the disposition little inclined to feel, if such methods can destroy the impression it has made. Where the heart has received a real wound, it can never be healed in this way; and it will bleed afresh in every solitary moment, and in spite of all our endeavours to take off our attention, it will tell us in secret that this is not the comfort which it wants; and thus the sorrow will remain in its full force, but without the advantages which might be derived from it.

If death has snatched away an affectionate and virtuous friend, how unworthy must they have been of such a blessing, who can really drive away the remembrance of it, and find comfort for such a loss in the thoughtless hurry of trifling amusements? Yet those who abandon themselves to hopeless sorrow, who cherish their affliction, and sullenly reject all comfort, will run into an extreme no less dangerous and destructive of every good and useful end which affliction was designed to answer.

Let us then endeavour to seek better resources, and arm ourselves with more firm and lasting comforts.

Whenever it pleases God to deprive us of a pious and valuable friend, we may reasonably sup-

pose it is not only for the advantage of the deceased, but for ours also; since every affliction that happens to us may certainly, if rightly used, be conducive to our eternal salvation. Let us humble ourselves under the afflicting hand of the ALMIGHTY; but let not affliction make us forget his mercies. Let us thank Him for the blessings we have enjoyed; and let us also thank Him for making our afflictions the means of recalling us to Himself when our affections were too apt to wander from Him, who is the giver of every good we can enjoy or hope. To Him let us pour forth all our sorrows with filial confidence, and beg that assistance and comfort which can never fail, and will never be denied to those who sincerely seek for them. Let us acknowledge our own blindness and weakness, and sincerely resign our will to his, even in the most painful sacrifices, with the fullest conviction, not only of that wisdom and power which preside over the universe, but also of that mercy and goodness by which even the minutest concerns of our own lives are directed, and which would permit no affliction to come upon us but for our greater good.

Let every blessing we are deprived of in this life serve to raise our affections to a better, where all our joys will be permanent and secure; where not only heavenly joys are laid up in store for us, but even our dearest earthly treasures will be restored to us; and where we may hope that we shall again enjoy them, without any of those fears and

sorrows, those weaknesses and imperfections, which in this life throw a damp over even our highest pleasures.

Let us not then endeavour to calm our sorrow for our departed friends, by driving them from our remembrance. To those who felt a real and ardent affection, the effort would be vain; nor can we suppose it the design of Providence that we should do so. Such strokes are given to force us to reflect; and friends removed to a far more exalted state, if we think of them as we ought, may be the most affecting monitors imaginable; and their remembrance may prove a most powerful incitement to every thing that is truly good and worthy.

The opinion that friendship lives beyond the grave, is most soothing to the afflicted mind; and both reason and scripture seem to countenance it. The thought that some sort of intercourse may be still permitted; and that while we continue in this imperfect state, it is possible that they may be allowed to minister to us for good by means unknown to us, is pleasing; and as we have no assurance of the contrary, it is hardly possible to avoid indulging it.

This indulgence, if kept within due bounds, is surely innocent, and may even be made useful to us; but then we should remember that friendship in such beings must be free from all those weaknesses with which, even in the best, it will be attended in this imperfect state. Though the same

affection may still remain, it must be exalted and refined beyond what we can at present form any idea of: our friends may still be watching over us with affectionate and anxious concern, still tenderly solicitous for our real welfare, and rejoicing at every advance we make in piety and goodness: but, enlightened by a clearer and more extensive view of things, they can no longer grieve for sufferings which will prove blessings in the end, or rejoice in prosperity, which exposes us to dangerous trials.

Let us consider what such a friend would say, if he could speak to us now.——How good, how pious, would he wish us to be! How trifling would he think the pursuits which are apt to engage so much of our attention! How powerfully would he preach to us the vanity of all terrestrial enjoyments; and with what ardour would he excite us to exert every faculty of our souls, in endeavouring to fit ourselves for those joys on which time and death can have no power. If he could feel a pain amidst the happiness in which he is placed, would it not grieve him to see us indulging our affliction for his loss, (or any other passions,) so far as to make us, in any degree, negligent in our duty, and forgetful of that God who has bestowed such joys on him, and has reserved the same in store for us, if we do not forfeit our title to them by our own fault?

If we wished to give proofs of our affection to

our friend, and desired to contribute to his happiness, let us remember, that the only way in which we can now do this, is to live as we are sure he would wish us to do, if he were still a witness of our conduct; and for aught we know he may be so. By these means our remembrance of him, far from stopping us in our course, will prove an incitement to every virtue; and the sense of present sorrow will raise the mind to future joy, and add new vigour to all our efforts for the attainment of it.

Fortitude does not consist in being insensible to the afflictions which come upon us in this world; but he who, when his heart is pierced with sorrow, can still love his God with unabated fervour, and submit with entire resignation to his will;—who can struggle with his affliction, and resolutely persist in a constant endeavour to perform all the duties of his station;—that man acts with real fortitude: and when the time shall come that all his trials are drawing towards a conclusion; when from the brink of the grave he looks back on the various scenes of his past life: those seasons of affliction which once appeared so severe, will then be what he will recollect with the greatest satisfaction; and the remembrance of them will afford him solid consolation, when all the little pleasures of this world are vanished and forgotten.

May these thoughts be deeply imprinted on my heart! May every affliction be received as it ought! and then it will in the end prove indeed a blessing!

ON THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION.

In the days of health and ease, in the hurry of business and pleasure, our thoughts are often carried away from those subjects which ought chiefly to employ them; and it may require some effort to call them off from the pleasing allurements of present objects, to others which appear to be placed at a distance; though this might give a far higher relish to every innocent pleasure, even at the present hour.

But when a change of circumstances affords more leisure for reflection; when by sickness, affliction, or any other cause, the pleasures and pursuits of life are interrupted: these excuses can no longer be pleaded; and far be it ever from those, who by such means are in any degree separated from the world, to judge unfavourably of those who are more engaged in it, or value themselves upon an opinion that they have attained an higher degree of excellence. Their situations are widely different, and much may be said to excuse the errors of the thoughtless and dissipated, to which the others could have no claim if they should ever fall into the like. Let them rather examine the state of their own minds, and observe whether pain does not too often produce the same bad effect with

pleasure; and whether they do not suffer their thoughts to be too much engaged by present evils, instead of raising them to what may afford the best of comforts, and the brightest hopes.

It seems strange that it should be difficult to do this, yet all who have been in such situations must probably at some time have found it so, and felt themselves inclined to dwell on every painful circumstance, though they can only aggravate it by doing so, and have no temptation of pleasure to plead in their excuse, for they well know that such thoughts can only give them pain. But here we allege, that our thoughts are not under our command;—and it is very certain that they are not entirely so, especially when the spirits are depressed, and the mind less capable of exertion than at other times. Yet even on such occasions, if something we truly valued were proposed as the object of our pursuit; if we would express our gratitude to some kind benefactor, or our affection to some much-loved friend; we should be disposed to exert ourselves, and, however little our power might be, our thoughts would be still engaged; we should be desirous of doing all we could, and regret that we could do no more: for where our affections are truly fixed, our thoughts and our efforts will be employed.

How many, by such considerations, have been rendered superior to sufferings, though not less sensible of them than others! Something which en-

gages our affections more strongly than present ease or pleasure, can make us willing to sacrifice them; and whatever could always do that, would be a never-failing support under the loss of them; and such are the comforts which religion offers: the love of an all-gracious Father—the kindness of an infinite benefactor—the support of an almighty Friend! Here our best affections may be for ever exercised, and forever satisfied; and on the exercise of our best affections must all our happiness depend: for what is happiness but the enjoyment of our wishes, that is to say, of the objects of our affections?

But perfect happiness is not the lot of this life. To be constantly advancing towards it, continually aiming at it, and continually successful in that aim, is the utmost we can hope for here: and this we may enjoy in every situation of life, when our affections are placed on the highest object: but we can never enjoy it constantly or securely, while they are fixed on any other. Are we afflicted? Our greatest joy remains. Are we disappointed? Our dearest hope cannot be taken away. Are we wounded by unkindness? Our best Friend will comfort us. Are we oppressed by pain and difficulties? Our Almighty Helper will support us. Are our good intentions misrepresented, and our best actions misinterpreted? He who sees the heart will do us justice. Are we neglected and forsaken by the world? He who made and rules

the world is ready to receive us, and never will forsake us. Is every sorrow heaped upon us, and every earthly comfort snatched away? The best of comforts yet remains, and an eternity of happiness awaits us.

How happy must be the situation of a rational creature, exerting all his powers for the best and noblest purposes, performing all the duties of his station, and making continual advances towards the perfection of his nature: depending with humble confidence on the divine assistance to support his weakness, and constantly and sincerely endeavouring to do the will of his Heavenly Father; who watches over him with far more than fatherly affection, who orders all events as shall be really best for him, accepts his endeavours, forgives his imperfections, and leads him through all the various paths of life to everlasting happiness!

How delightful is the thought, that we are indeed the objects of HIS love and favour; that all events which can befal us may be made the means of good; that we may flee to HIM as to a tender and faithful friend, in all our sorrows, in all our trials, and be certain of that comfort and assistance of which we stand in need!

This surely is happiness: and this may be enjoyed in every situation in which we can be placed in this world, for it is totally independent on outward circumstances. All that the world most values can never bestow it, nor afford true and lasting satis-

faction without it; nor can the greatest afflictions ever take it away. If then, in the time of pleasure and success, we feel that something still is wanting to complete our happiness, and find our enjoyments disturbed by the dread of losing them; or if in the time of affliction we are ready to sink beneath our burden; when we are inclined to be dissatisfied or dejected, instead of giving way to such dispositions, let us think of the happiness of the state we have been describing, and ask ourselves if such be really the picture of our situation? If it be, our pleasures may be enjoyed without anxiety; and in the midst of every trial, we may say with confidence, "Yet will I rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the GOD of my salvation:" and such joy "no man taketh from you." Affliction or human weakness may overcloud our joy for a time; but they cannot destroy it; superior to all, it will constantly overbalance, and in the end entirely conquer them.

But if this be not our situation, then let us ask ourselves why it is not so? For this happiness, great as it is, may certainly be attained by all. If then we do not enjoy it, what is the hindrance? It is vain to plead the weakness and imperfection of our nature: for more than is in our power will never be required. By doing the best we can, we may secure the favour of our GOD; our weakness will be assisted, and our imperfections never laid to our charge.

Does the remembrance of our past faults deprive

us of our happiness? It need not do so, since through the merits of an all-gracious Redeemer, the greatest will be forgiven, if we repent and forsake them.

Does the sense of our present imperfection, and the consciousness of faults which we frequently fall into, prevent our enjoying it? Let us lay our hand upon our heart, and candidly examine whether it be, or be not, in our power to remedy that imperfection, and avoid those faults? If it be, let us immediately and resolutely set about a work of the utmost consequence to our present and future peace;—for certainly, if we can wilfully offend our Maker even in the smallest instance, or neglect any means of expressing our love and gratitude to Him, those sentiments are not felt by us as they ought to be, nor can they produce the happiness we aim at. If this be not in our power, yet if we really and sincerely exert our utmost endeavours, then what we lament is mere human weakness, the sense of which should never destroy our peace: for what we *could not* avoid, will never be imputed as a fault, and involuntary errors and imperfections need not deprive us of our confidence and hope: but then we must be sure that they are involuntary.

And here indeed doubts may arise, to which even the best must often be liable in this imperfect state, for it is by no means sufficient that we do not offend deliberately, and with the free consent of the will. If we find ourselves continually falling

into the same faults, however little they may appear in themselves, this certainly gives reason to suspect some inclination still prevailing in our hearts contrary to that which ought to be the leading principle of every action; and such an apprehension ought indeed to awaken our attention, and engage us to exert our utmost diligence to trace the cause of such faults, and sincerely endeavour to root it out, whatever pain the sacrifice may cost us: for we shall by no means form a just estimate of our state, if we judge of it only from our sentiments in the hours of solitude and reflection. The unguarded moment must also be taken into the account, and may often afford a much clearer insight into the heart, too apt in many ways to impose upon us, and lead us to form a partial opinion of our own disposition and conduct.

But though such doubts as these should excite our care and attention, and may often give pain even to those whose intentions are sincerely good, yet still they ought not to destroy their happiness; for it should always be remembered, that the thing required in order to that happiness is, to do the best we can, which certainly is always in the power of every one.

This consideration can afford no comfort to those who knowingly encourage themselves in any thing wrong, or who neglect to exert their endeavours to conquer their weakness, and improve their powers. But it is comfortable indeed to those who sincerely

wish and endeavour to do their duty, but who are discouraged by a sense of their imperfections, and disposed to carry to excess those doubts which in a certain degree are the necessary consequence of the frailty of human nature, and which are often increased by dispositions in themselves truly laudable, such as humility, caution, an earnest desire of perfection, and very exalted ideas of it. Those whose notions of excellence are not raised very high, are generally easily satisfied with their attainments, and often proud of such things as would to others appear subjects for humiliation and distrust of themselves.

The humble and sincere Christian may rejoice in the thought, that the enjoyment of the best of blessings, the favour of God, and everlasting happiness, is in his power, and never can be forfeited but by his own fault. A diffidence of ourselves is indeed natural and reasonable, when we reflect on our past faults, our present weakness and imperfection, and the exalted purity at which we aim; but this, while it checks every vain and presumptuous thought, and teaches us attention and humility, should yet never discourage our hopes, nor deprive us of our peace of mind. It is the sincere endeavour that is required, and will be assisted and accepted, and that is in the power of every one, in every moment of his life. Whatever is past, he may *now* form a good resolution, exert his efforts, and enjoy the happiness at which he aims: and this is a happiness peculiar to religion alone.

Those who speak of virtue as its own reward, and dwell on the thought of the heartfelt satisfaction it must afford, generally represent to their imagination some exalted instance of it; they paint to themselves some extraordinary exertion of generosity or benevolence; some hero, who has sacrificed every selfish consideration to the noblest motives, and exults in the thoughts of his triumph; or some illustrious benefactor, by whom numbers have been made happy, and who enjoys the happiness of them all. If they descend to private life, still they take the moment of some successful exertion of virtue—some distress relieved, some good bestowed; something in short, which the heart feels, and which the heart, that is not lost to every generous and exalted sentiment, must feel with delight.

These are pleasures indeed; and those who sincerely seek for them, will probably enjoy much more of them than they might otherwise have imagined; but even such will find that many of these pleasures are placed beyond their reach, and that they cannot by any be constantly enjoyed.

To do great actions is the lot of few; and in common life, disappointments often attend the best endeavours. Poverty, sickness, or affliction, check the most active spirits, and confine their powers; or even where this is not the case, still those pleasing successful instances of virtue must depend on circumstances which human power is unable to

command; and therefore, considered merely in themselves, they cannot afford a constant and never-failing source of happiness.

A great part of the lives even of the best of men must be spent in actions which do not afford pleasures of that sort; and though the delight which attends them is certainly a sentiment implanted for wise and gracious purposes, yet something more is necessary to furnish a happiness which may be enjoyed at all times, and in all situations.

Those who have passed many days, and perhaps years, in constant and tedious sufferings; who by disease, the loss of any of their faculties, or any other cause, are rendered a burthen to their friends; or perhaps are reduced to a state of solitude, and are not so happy as to have any friends about them; whose utmost efforts can seldom attain to any thing farther than *lessening* the trouble they must give to others, and submitting with patience to the lot assigned them; such persons will not often find reason for that exultation of mind, which attends on active and successful virtue; but on the contrary, finding how little is the utmost they can do, they will be more inclined to be dissatisfied with themselves, and hardly able to reconcile themselves to a life in appearance of so little use.

Those who from the unhappiness of their circumstances and situations are obliged continually to suffer from the faults of others; whose endeavours

to please are attended with constant mortifications and disappointments: and who, by the daily sacrifice of their own inclinations, can do nothing more than lessen evils which they are unable to prevent or cure;—far from feeling the triumph of virtue—will often be obliged to submit to the sufferings which should attend only on guilt, and finding their endeavours unsuccessful, and their conduct frequently blamed, may be led to doubt whether they have not in some way given occasion to the humiliations which they suffer; and being unable to satisfy others, may find it difficult to be satisfied with themselves.

Even those who are placed in situations by no means so painful and discouraging as these, and who meet with much more frequent opportunities of enjoying the satisfaction of successful virtue, must yet spend a great part of their lives in such actions, as do not give occasion to it; but which, considered merely in themselves, would appear little more than indifferent, and often tedious and insipid.

The little compliances which duty and civility continually require, the employments of domestic life, and numberless other things which must take up a considerable part of the life of every one, and the omission of which would be highly improper and even blameable, can yet afford nothing of that heartfelt exultation which is supposed to be the attendant of virtue; and which certainly does at-

tend it on many occasions, even where nothing further was considered than the present satisfaction.

But religion, by exalting our hopes and efforts to the highest object, furnishes a new motive for action, which may extend its influence over every moment of our lives; it teaches us to exalt the most trifling actions into exertions of virtue; and to find, in the employments of every hour, the means of improvement in those heavenly dispositions which are necessary to our happiness both here and hereafter.

The tedious hours of suffering afford continual opportunities for the exercise of an affectionate and filial resignation. He who owns a Father's hand in every trial, far from complaining that he is rendered useless to the world, and deprived of the satisfaction he might have enjoyed in bestowing happiness, will be convinced that his situation is such as is really best for him; and submitting patiently to all the humiliations which attend it, will find in every pleasure lost, an occasion to exercise the noblest sentiments.

Those who are discouraged by mortifications and disappointments, should consider for whose sake they act; and, directing all their efforts to please Him who never will reject them, will feel a strength of mind which nothing in this world could inspire; will bear for his sake whatever sufferings they may meet with from others; and resolutely persevere in the path of duty, though attended with no apparent

pleasure or success. They will look up to heaven with humble yet cheerful confidence, and remember that their task is assigned by Him, who only knows what trials are necessary to improve and confirm their virtues; and that while they do their best they are sure to be accepted.

The same disposition will extend its influence over all those actions which are generally considered as matters of indifference, or of small importance; things which are performed of course, and without any particular satisfaction, or are omitted without consideration of their consequences. The employments of every day and every hour, which are often more influenced by habit than by reflection, even when they are such as ought by no means to be neglected; the duties of our calling; the care of families; the little compliances which are required in society; the attentions of civility; every thing in short, which it is right to do even on the most trifling occasions, will be done from the same principle which inspires the most exalted instances of virtue, directed to the same end, and attended with a satisfaction of the same kind.

He who would be ready to resign his life, if his duty required the sacrifice, will from the same motive resign his indulgences, his pleasures, his inclinations, his vanity—every thing great or small, which the duty of his situation, and the present time, demand from him; and the dullest hours he is ever obliged to pass, will be animated by the

same spirit which is exerted in the most pleasing and active virtues. In all he will do his best, he will endeavour to conform to the will of his Heavenly Father, and express his love and gratitude to Him, and thus, in all, the most exalted sentiments will be exercised and enjoyed, the noblest efforts will be exerted, and the success will be secure.

If then we find ourselves weary of the employment in which we are engaged, or feel time hang heavy on our hands; let us consider whether we can employ ourselves in any thing better? If we can, let us embrace the opportunity, and be happy. If we cannot; if some dull and tedious way of spending our time, or merely patient and silent suffering, be what our present duty requires, (as must frequently be the case in the lives of all;) then let us consider, that by submitting to it cheerfully, we do the best we can, and in so doing are always certain of the divine favour and acceptance; the gloom is dispelled, the time which before appeared almost a blank in life, now opens a wide field for the exercise of virtue; its pleasures are felt, and its hopes enjoyed.

Thus may the humble Christian, whose circumstances and abilities are most confined, and who has the fewest opportunities for the exercise of active virtue, still enjoy the happiness which attends it; for to him, *that* happiness depends not on the situation in which he is placed, but on the sentiments of the heart; he performs the task assigned

to him, whatever that task may be, with the same views, and with the same alacrity; not repining that he cannot choose his part, but endeavouring to improve to the utmost that which is allotted for him, and to cultivate by continual exertion, in every different situation in life, those dispositions which may recommend him to the favour of his Maker, and fit him for that happiness which is the object of his hopes.

When by sickness, affliction, or any other cause, our spirits are depressed; when the mortifications of society, the disappointments of our pursuits, and the little satisfaction to be met with in earthly pleasures, incline us to be weary of the world; let us take a view of it in another light, and consider it as what it certainly may be—the road to happiness; the prospect is changed at once, and the most painful life appears truly desirable.

We complain of the loss of some pleasure which we valued; but if all were taken away, that which alone can make this life truly valuable would yet remain, and we should still have reason to receive the gift with thankfulness, and pursue our course with joy.

Let us but pause a moment, and consider what it is to be able to say to ourselves,—"I shall be happy, perfectly and unchangeably happy, through eternity!"

We cannot indeed say this positively while we continue in our state of trial, but this we can say,—

"I may be so:—it is in my power to be so;" not indeed from a dependence in our own strength, or a confidence in our own merits; but the strength of ALMIGHTY GOD is ready to assist our weakness, and the merits of our blessed SAVIOUR to atone for our imperfections; and these we may obtain; for of these a voice from heaven assures us, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find."

ON GRATITUDE.

OF all the sentiments of the human heart, there is none which appears to be more natural and universal than Gratitude. One might, indeed, be almost inclined to suppose it the effect of instinct, rather than of reason, since we see such strong appearances of it even in brutes. Wherever nature is not perverted, gratitude seems to follow kindness, as the effect follows the cause in any other instance. But amongst the refinements of polished life, the voice of nature is often suppressed; and under the shelter of artificial manners the selfish passions are indulged to excess.

Politeness, the expression of a delicate mind and a benevolent heart, is taught as an art to disguise the want of these qualities; and appearances take the place of realities, till the realities

themselves are neglected, and almost forgotten. Perhaps if the busy and the gay had leisure to look into their own hearts, they might find that they possessed some good qualities of which they did not suspect themselves: but fashion is the general guide; and even follies and vices, if they are fashionable, become objects of vanity, and are affected by those who have no title to them. Yet still, in the midst of all the variations of fashion and prejudice, the esteem due to gratitude is in some degree preserved, and the want of it is a fault which no one will ever confess.

A disposition to pride, to anger, to ambition, to indolence, and many other blameable qualities, may have been acknowledged by many: but none ever confessed a disposition to ingratitude, and perhaps none ever was conscious of it: and yet, amongst all the complaints made against the world by those who, being out of humour with themselves, fancy they have reason to be so with every body else, there is hardly any one more universal than that of the ingratitude they have met with. Nor indeed is the complaint confined to such persons alone; for it must be owned, that even the benevolent heart will sometimes find but too much reason for it, and must feel in some instances what it would wish to conceal from all the world.

But such instances should not induce us to pronounce a general censure; and perhaps a more enlarged view of mankind might shew us, that the

effects ascribed to ingratitude are often owing to some other cause, and that those who make the greatest complaints are in fact those who have the least reason so to do, and have themselves given occasion to that ingratitude of which they complain, by expecting such returns as they have no right to claim.

Perhaps these complaints, in many instances, may be owing to the want of distinguishing sufficiently between that sort of gratitude which is paid as a debt, and that which is a sentiment of the heart. Every benefit conferred, according to its different degree, has a right to claim the first; a word or a look may inspire the last more than the gift of millions could have done.

These two kinds of gratitude are different in many instances, and may be entirely separated; but painful indeed is the lot of him who is reduced to *owe* the first, where he is unable to *feel* the last; for the first alone may be a burthen—the last is always a pleasure; the first would be glad to return more than has been received, by way of discharging the debt—the last earnestly wishes to make every possible return, by way of expressing what it feels, but would never wish to lose the impression. In short, the one is the return due to *benefits*, the other to *kindness;* the one may be claimed, and must be paid; but even to mention a *claim* to the other, would endanger the title to it.

That benefits alone cannot give a right to the

latter sort of gratitude, will be evident, if we consider that it is a sentiment of the heart, which is and can be paid only to kindness, or the appearance of kindness; and benefits may spring from very different motives, in which perhaps the person on whom they are conferred has in reality no concern, nor ever was the object in view; they may be embittered by a thousand circumstances which may make it a pain to receive them; or even without these, they may want that kindness which alone can make it a pleasure to a delicate mind.

In the early part of life, when the sentiments have generally more vivacity than refinement, and before experience has taught the painful art of allaying every pleasure by suspicion, these two kinds of gratitude generally go together. Every benefit is supposed to proceed from kindness, and is felt as such; and as all the benevolent affections of an innocent heart are attended with pleasure, they are generally at that time carried to excess. Every appearance of kindness is then received with warm and affectionate gratitude. Imagination bestows a thousand excellencies on the person from whom it comes; every thing is expected from the supposed friend, and every expression of gratitude seems too little to return the kindness received. Perhaps a little time discovers the deceit; the obligation is found to have proceeded from some motive quite different from

what was imagined; and the person who conferred it sinks to a level with the rest of the world, and disappoints all the hopes which had been formed. The affectionate and grateful heart remains the same as before; but the object to which that affection and gratitude were addressed, is no longer to be found: it wishes to preserve the same sentiments, and grieves that it can no longer feel them: but the apparent change proceeds only from the former mistake. Probably there is hardly any person of strong sensibility who has not experienced mortifications of this sort; and ingratitude may often have been laid to the charge of those, whose only fault was, that they carried their gratitude and their expressions of it to excess, without sufficiently considering what grounds they had for it. Those who make the complaint might by a different conduct have preserved their claim, but complaints can never regain what they have lost; to expect it, would be to suppose that unkindness should produce the same effect as kindness.

Far be it ever from our thoughts to offer any excuse for real ingratitude. The person who is capable of it is a monster in nature, whom all agree to condemn, and all would wish to avoid. But the greater our horror of the crime, the greater should be our caution not to charge any with it unjustly; and greater care and attention are necessary never to give occasion to it.

Those who are so ready to complain of the

want of gratitude in others, should examine their own hearts, and inquire whether they really have any right to that return which they expect;—whether true kindness was indeed their motive:—and whether they have not allayed the obligation by such circumstances as must destroy the effect of it, and leave no impression on the person who received it, but a painful consciousness of owing a debt, instead of that heartfelt gratitude which enjoys the thought of it? While those who wish to inspire true gratitude, should consider the means by which it may be produced; and they are such as, more or less, are generally in the power of all.

To bestow considerable benefits, belongs indeed to few; but that kindness which comes from the heart, and which the heart feels and returns, is independent on such circumstances. Without this, the greatest benefits may give pain; with it, a trifle becomes important, and inspires true and lasting gratitude. For the exercise of this, numberless opportunities are continually presenting themselves in the daily intercourse of life; and those who are attentive to take advantage of them, will hardly be wanting on greater occasions, either in doing acts of kindness, or in that manner of doing them, which changes an obligation from a burthen to a pleasure. They can enter into the feelings of those they oblige, and are attentive to spare them every circumstance which may be painful; while those who act upon different motives, will expect more than

they have any title to, and probably much more than they themselves would pay, if they could change places with the persons obliged; for the same exclusive regard to *self*, which makes them complain so loudly of the ingratitude they have experienced, would probably make them ungrateful in their turn, if they were to receive obligations instead of conferring them.

But while we are considering that benevolence of heart which should be the source of every act of kindness, and that delicacy of manners with which all such acts should be attended, (and indeed it is impossible to consider them in too strong a light,) let us not however forget that the want of these can by no means discharge the person obliged from gratitude considered as a *duty;* that is to say, from as much as it is in his power to pay; for more than that can never be required.

Monsieur Du Clos, in his ingenious and elegant essay, *Sur les Mœurs*, has many excellent reflections on this subject, in which the duties of persons obliged are considered at large: (see chap. 16. *Sur la Reconnoissance, et sur l'Ingratitude.*) He concludes with an observation well deserving particular attention, because it sets in a strong light the fallacy of an opinion which, like many others, has been too generally received without sufficient examination, merely because it sounds plausibly. His words are these:

" J'ai plusieurs fois entendu avancer sur ce sujet

une opinion qui ne me paroit ni juste ni decente. Le caractere vindicatif part, dit-on, du même principe que le caractere reconnoissant, parcequ'il est également naturel de se souvenir des bons et des mauvais services. Si le simple souvenir du bien et du mal qu'on a eprouvé, étoit la regle du ressentiment qu'on en garde, on auroit raison; mais il n'y a rien de si different, et même de si peu dependant l'un de l'autre. L'esprit vindicatif part de l'orgueil, souvent uni avec le sentiment de sa propre foiblesse; on s'estime trop, et l'on craint beaucoup. La reconnoissance marque d'abord un esprit de justice, mais elle suppose encore une ame disposée à aimer, pour qui la haine seroit un tourment, et qui s'en affranchit plus encore par sentiment, que par reflexion. Il y a certainement des caracteres plus aimants que d'autres, et ceux-la sont reconnoissans par le principe même qui les empeche d'être vindicatifs."

This supposed connexion between certain good and bad qualities is an opinion we find often maintained, without being sufficiently examined; though probably, in most instances, it would be found directly contrary to the truth, as it has been shewn to be in this; and the consequences of such an opinion are often of much greater importance than may at first be imagined.

Pride, for example, is generally said to attend on superior talents and attainments. In consequence of this opinion, how often do we see those who are

destitute of both, affecting that self-sufficiency which they suppose to belong to them, and endeavouring to gain the reputation of superior excellence, by assuming the appearance of the fault which they imagine is connected with it; while those who possess the qualities which others would affect, are continually aspiring to greater degrees of excellence, and finding that their highest attainments always fall short of their wishes, even by those attainments are taught humility.

The same might be observed in many other instances. Virtue and vice, the amiable and unamiable qualities, are in their own nature opposite, and tend to destroy each other, whenever they subsist in any degree in the same character; and perhaps the most effectual way of eradicating any bad disposition from the minds of young persons, is not so much by attacking it directly, as by endeavouring to cultivate those qualities which are particularly contrary to it, and to give them a clear and just idea of those which they may have been led to imagine are connected with it.

To the affectionate and grateful heart, every opportunity of exercising those qualities affords real enjoyment: it cannot help seeking for them, because from those feelings it must derive its greatest pleasures; without the exercise of them it cannot be happy. How then can it be so in exercising such as are contrary to them? A very little reasoning and reflection must surely be sufficient to con-

vince any one of the fallacy of such an opinion; but to those who really *feel* that disposition to affection and gratitude of which others *talk*, all reasoning upon the subject must be unnecessary: those sentiments will be ever cherished: and notwithstanding the many mortifications and disappointments with which they may be attended, they will still, in some degree, carry their reward along with them. Our feelings are greatly influenced by our pursuits, by those objects which engage our attention. The person who is continually in pursuit of opportunities for exercising the benevolent affections, either by conferring or acknowledging kindness, will overlook a thousand trifling causes of offence which might have awakened resentment in the breast of another; while those in whom the selfish passions prevail, will be equally insensible to numberless instances of kindness, which would have filled the hearts of others with gratitude and joy; just as a person who is eager in the chase will disregard the beauties of the prospect which surrounds him, and know no more of the country through which he passed than if he had never seen it.

But while the affectionate and grateful heart thus pursues and enjoys every opportunity of exercising those qualities, it must be owned, at the same time, that they may lead to many mortifications and disappointments. Those who are eager to catch at every appearance of kindness may sometimes be

misled by false appearances: and those who are disposed to love all who have shewn them any kindness, may afterwards find that their affection has been misplaced.

To prevent such mistakes, as far as penetration and delicacy of judgment can do it, is certainly desirable; but to avoid them entirely, is perhaps impossible: and surely none would wish to avoid them by running into the contrary extreme, and losing all the pleasures attending on such dispositions.

It should however be observed, that the disposition to seek for obligation relates to kindnesses, rather than to considerable benefits. Affection must precede the benefit, or at least must be engaged by the manner of conferring it, in order to make it a pleasure to a person of true delicacy. This does not proceed from pride; but because such a person, having a high sense of gratitude, is unwilling to contract an engagement to one he cannot esteem and love. To be unable to entertain those sentiments which might be thought due, would be to him a continual suffering; while one whose feelings are centered in himself, is glad to get what he wants at any rate, and gives himself no concern about making any return for it; or at best thinks he has done this very sufficiently by conferring some favour which he supposes equivalent to what he has received. Yet, in fact, a real obligation freely conferred on one who had no claim to

it, and willingly received by him as such, can never afterwards be entirely cancelled by any act of the person who received it, even though it should be in his power to return benefits far beyond what he has received; because, in one respect they must always fall short of it: for the first benefit conferred was a free and unmerited kindness, to which the person obliged had no title; but no return can ever be such; and all that can be done in consequence of it, is still but a *return*, however it may exceed in other respects; so that whoever once acknowledges himself to be under an obligation, though he may not be bound to make all the return which an unreasonable person may require, is yet bound ever to acknowledge it.

This, however, relates chiefly to such obligations as are really conferred with a view to serve the person obliged. The case is different when one person is benefited by another merely from a concurrence of accidental circumstances, or when the benefit was conferred from ostentation, or with a view to gain some greater advantage in return. In these last cases, indeed, it seems a sort of bargain, in which the person who gains what he aimed at has received his price, and has no reason to complain. Yet even in these, and indeed in every instance, the truly grateful will ever be ready to acknowledge the obligations received, in their various degrees, though the sentiments excited by such obligations are far different from those which are the return due to real kindness.

That gratitude may sometimes be a duty when it is not a pleasure, is but too certain; that from being a true and heartfelt pleasure, it may become a burthen, is no less so; but the pleasure of self-approbation still remains to compensate this mortification: and they must be depraved indeed, who ever felt that pleasure while they were acting an ungrateful part, or who can be happy without feeling it.

The proud and selfish generally mistake their own happiness, and in no instance more than in this of gratitude. Those who know what it is to feel its tenderest and most refined sentiments, when the kindness of some friend, truly loved and valued, makes the heart overflow with gratitude and joy, and all language seem too weak to express what it feels, will be little inclined to envy those who are too proud to be obliged, and too self-sufficient to think they stand in need of any thing which the kindness of others can bestow. Even the little acts of kindness attending on the daily occurrences of life, afford pleasures far beyond *their* reach: for the intercourse of real kindness, and that gratitude which is its due return, whether expressed in the smallest or the greatest matters, is always attended with a heartfelt satisfaction on both sides: and they know little of their own interest, who from pride, insensibility, or inattention, neglect the opportunities, which, in a greater or less degree, are continually offering themselves for enjoying it.

But if the grateful heart experience such satisfaction in the sentiments excited by little and imfect kindnesses, and paid to frail and imperfect beings, how exquisite must be the delight attending on that gratitude which is excited by infinite obligations, and paid to infinite perfection! No doubt can here intervene as to the motive which gave occasion to the benefit conferred. We had no claim on our Almighty Benefactor, and can make Him no return: for we have nothing but what we have received. Here we can have no apprehension of carrying our love and gratitude too far, and being reduced to grieve for the faults and imperfections of those on whom they were bestowed, and from whom they cannot now be recalled. All is perfection and goodness, and all our love and gratitude must ever fall short of what we owe. No fears can here arise of a change of conduct, or that a friend and benefactor may cease to be such, and wound the grateful heart by unkindness and upbraidings; the same goodness will for ever continue, and our warmest gratitude be ever overpaid by new instances of that kindness which can never fail but through our own fault.

Religion to the truly grateful heart is a continual exercise of that virtue; and considered in this view, what a pleasure is diffused over the most painful trials to which it can ever call us!——

Our existence, with every blessing attending on it;—our redemption, with the hopes of pardon

secured by it;—and an eternity of happiness prepared for us hereafter;—are surely benefits sufficient to awaken gratitude in the most unfeeling heart; and can it then be possible that those on whom a kind word or look can make an impression never to be effaced, should be insensible to obligations like these, or return them merely by a cold obedience, often paid unwillingly, instead of that warm and animated gratitude which thinks it can never do enough?

Gratitude excited by real kindness, and joined with true affection and esteem, can never be a lifeless, inactive sentiment: it will be continually seeking opportunities to express what it feels; it will consider every such opportunity as a valuable acquisition, though attended with pain and difficulty: it will find a satisfaction even in these, because in these it can shew itself most strongly. It will be exerted even in trifles, and expressed in words and looks, though nothing farther should be in its power. But when gratitude is raised to the Highest Object, the means of expressing it can never be wanting; every exercise of every virtue performed with that view will be accepted; and what a satisfaction must the grateful heart enjoy, from the thought of being continually employed in expressing its sentiments, by making such returns as the Almighty Benefactor requires, and will accept!

With this view, how earnestly will it seek for

every occasion of doing good to others! With what patience and benevolence will it support every injury received, and how earnestly and constantly will it endeavour by the gentlest means to bring back offenders to peace and goodness, instead of exasperating them by reproaches and upbraidings!

Considered in this view, how pleasing will every difficult exercise of virtue appear; and what a never-failing source of comfort and satisfaction will be found even in the severest sufferings to which human nature is liable! All may serve to express our gratitude: and to those who truly feel it, this must always be a pleasure, to which no sufferings can render them insensible. Nor need the meanest and the weakest ever be afraid that their humble efforts will pass unnoticed. Earthly benefactors may be removed beyond our reach; and even when present, they are liable to be misled by false appearances, and may be often mistaken in the opinions they form of the gratitude they have met with; but He who sees the heart, will observe and accept the silent wishes of the truly grateful, when wishes only are in their power, for it is the gratitude of the heart which he requires; the means of expressing it depend on outward circumstances.

How happy then are they in whom these sentiments are warm and active!—for here gratitude is continually excited by new benefits; and here it

may be indulged to the greatest height, without fear of excess, and without doubt of acceptance. The heavenly intercourse is continued through life. Religion, instead of being a restraint upon the inclinations, becomes an indulgence of them, by being a continual exercise of the best affections, placed upon the most excellent object. Numberless instances of infinite goodness are discovered, which would escape the observation of the thoughtless and inattentive. The pleasure of gratitude is increased by every exercise of it; and new efforts are continually excited to make every possible return; efforts which must always be attended with a heartfelt satisfaction, because they flow from a delightful principle, and are certain of success.

Thus may gratitude afford continual pleasures even in this world, and lead us at length to that blessed state, where it will be excited by unbounded benefits, and exercised and enjoyed through eternity.

ON HAPPINESS.

WHOEVER takes an attentive survey of mankind cannot fail to be struck with this observation—That, in general, all are roving about in pursuit of enjoyment, and seldom think of seeking it within themselves.

It is very certain that man was formed for society; and it is his duty, as well as interest, to cultivate a social disposition: to endeavour to make himself useful and pleasing to others; to promote and to enjoy their happiness; to encourage the friendly affections, and find in them the source of the greatest pleasures which this world can bestow. But, alas! society too often exhibits a far different scene. We see weariness and disgust reign in the gayest assemblies.

Conversation, instead of turning upon such subjects as might at once afford amusement and improvement, often languishes for want of materials, or is engrossed by the most trifling subjects, so that it becomes merely an idle dissipation of time—perhaps even a pernicious abuse of it; since it may afford opportunities for the exercise of many bad qualities, which, by appearing in disguise, are rendered still more mischievous. Ill-nature shelters itself under the mask of wit. A desire to depreciate the merit of the absent, or perhaps to mortify the present, endeavours to pass itself off for the love of sincerity and truth, or for a superior degree of zeal in the cause of virtue. Vanity assumes the appearance of every good and amiable quality, as occasion offers; or flatters the weaknesses of others, and applauds what ought to be condemned, in hopes of gaining favour, and being flattered in return. Sometimes merely for want of something to say, and without the least intention of doing mischief,

an idle report is repeated, which tends to injure an innocent person—perhaps irreparably; or to fix a trifling ridicule upon a worthy character, and thereby destroy the influence of its good example. By these and numberless other means, conversation is perverted from that purpose for which it was intended: and a meeting of rational beings, which should have contributed to improve the powers of their minds by mutually assisting each other, and to strengthen the ties of affection and benevolence by the continual exercise of those qualities, often produces a quite contrary effect; and they part, filled with far different sentiments, and weary and dissatisfied with themselves and with each other.

Many causes might be assigned for this strange, though too frequent abuse of what seems calculated to afford the highest rational entertainment, since every vice and folly contribute towards it; but amongst others, this is certainly one—That mankind often seek society, not with a view to be useful and pleasing to others, or even with any great expectation of being pleased themselves, but merely because they know not how to amuse themselves alone; and those who associate with others, because they are weary of themselves, are not very likely to contribute to the pleasure or advantage of society.

While all are in pursuit of happiness, it is strange to observe, that there are so few who cultivate and improve those powers which they possess within

themselves; and the consequences of this neglect are certainly much more fatal, even to present happiness, than is generally imagined.

Supposing it were possible, that those who cannot please themselves in solitude should be able to please others, and be happy in society; yet it is impossible to be always engaged in it; and even those who have the greatest opportunities of enjoying it, know not how soon they may be reduced to a state of solitude. It is therefore highly necessary for all, to provide themselves with solitary pleasures; for the mind of man is naturally active; it wants employment and amusement, and if it be not supplied with such as are innocent and useful, it will be apt to sink into a state of languor and disgust, or run astray into the wildest extravagancies of fancy, which may lead insensibly into endless doubts and errors, productive of consequences which may prove fatal to happiness both here and hereafter.

It is therefore certainly a point of importance to all, and especially to them who are entering into life, to cultivate those powers and dispositions of mind which may prove sources of innocent amusement. When these are neglected, they are easily lost; but being exercised, they will continually improve; and if properly directed, they may be productive of much advantage as well as pleasure.

The impression which any object makes upon the mind, often depends much less upon the object

itself, than on the disposition of the person who receives it, and the light in which he has been accustomed to consider things.

Suppose a large number of persons entering at once into a thick wood.—One will enjoy the refreshing shade; another will complain that it deprives him of the prospect; a third will be employed in observing the various kinds of trees and plants which it contains; a fourth will consider them as the riches of the nation, he will form them in imagination into ships, and suppose them maintaining the empire of the seas, or spreading our commerce round the world; another will think of the money they might produce, he will long for the power of levelling them all with the ground, and carrying the profits to the gaming table:—perhaps to some it may appear only as a gloomy solitude, which they wish to quit as soon as possible; while others, struck with the awful scenery of the place, feel their minds elevated by it, and enjoy an exalted kind of pleasure, which can only be felt, but can never be described. Others again will consider it merely as the path they must pass through, and go on as fast as they can, without paying the least attention to the objects which surround them. Yet the forest is still the same, and as an object of sense makes the same impression on all; though the emotions excited in the mind may perhaps be different in every one who enters it.

The same will be found to be the case in regard

to most of the objects which engage our attention; and though this difference in the impression made by them depend in some degree on natural disposition, yet certainly it also depends on many circumstances which are by no means as independent on ourselves as we are apt to imagine.

One person takes a book merely to pass away the time; another takes it in hopes of gaining admiration afterwards, by displaying the knowledge he has acquired:—the first is tired, the second disappointed; yet perhaps the book was calculated to yield both pleasure and improvement to one who should read it with a view to these.

Another reads because it is the fashion, and thinks to acquire the reputation of taste, by admiring what has been admired by those who are esteemed good judges: but his reading must be a task, since his memory, not his feelings and his judgment, must inform him when he is to be pleased, and what he is to commend.

Another takes a contrary method, and thinks he shall shew superior delicacy and penetration by disliking what others approve, and discovering faults which they did not observe; he reads with a resolution *not* to be pleased, and in this he will certainly succeed; and will not only deprive himself of a present pleasure, but the same disposition will probably be extended to other instances, and by degrees may poison all the sweets of life; for every pleasure in this world must in its own nature be

imperfect; and those who accustom themselves to seek for something to find fault with, will acquire an habit of viewing the dark side of every thing, till they lose the power of enjoyment, and the whole world can afford them nothing but objects of dislike.

We may be amused for a time with what only strikes the senses or engages the attention. A fine picture, a beautiful prospect, a melodious voice, an entertaining history, can hardly fail to afford some pleasure to every one; but they will make a slight impression on those who have never cultivated a taste for such things; for any pleasure in which the mind is merely passive, can afford only a transient satisfaction; but when the object presented to us (of whatever kind it may be) awakens the imagination, and calls the powers of the mind into action, it may then be really enjoyed, and may lead to pleasures far beyond what at first sight it seemed calculated to produce, by exciting new sentiments and reflections, and exercising and improving those faculties on which our enjoyments so much depend.

There is a certain indolence of mind in many persons which is no less prejudicial to their happiness than to their improvement; they will not be at the trouble of seeking for pleasures in their own stores, or of contributing their part to the enjoyment of those which are presented to them, but run continually from one object to another, and

spend their lives in a fruitless pursuit of what, by the help of a little exertion, they might have found in numberless instances which they have overlooked; and what, in fact, they never can enjoy, while they consider it as totally independent on themselves.

It is owing to this that we see all places of public amusement so much frequented by persons who appear to take no pleasure in them. They cannot amuse themselves, and therefore they go where they are told amusement will be provided for them, and though they feel themselves disappointed, they are unwilling to own it either to themselves or others, for they know no remedy, nor will they be at the trouble of seeking any. This gives an air of gloominess to every place of amusement; for even the gayest scenes cannot afford delight to those who do not bring with them a disposition to be pleased themselves, and to enjoy and endeavour to promote the pleasure of others.

It has been observed, that pain would be a trifle, could we banish memory and anticipation, and feel only that of the present moment: the same will be found true in regard to pleasure. We must reflect, in order to suffer or enjoy in any great degree. The pleasure which drives away thought will be felt only for the moment, and will leave a vacancy of mind behind it, which will soon lead to that state of distaste and weariness so contrary to every real enjoyment, and often more difficult to support than even positive suffering.

This is true, not only of trifling amusements, but even of those of a more exalted kind. Reflection is necessary to the enjoyment of all; and therefore to acquire a habit of it, is a point of the utmost importance to happiness in every situation in life; yet it is a point much too little attended to, in most systems of education.

Instruction (according to the usual method) consists in exercising the memory, while the other powers of the mind are neglected, and either become totally inactive, or else run wild into a thousand extravagancies, and prove the most fatal enemies to that happiness which they were intended to promote; in order to which, it is necessary that they should be cultivated and improved, and directed to proper objects, not lost for want of exertion, nor suppressed from a fear of the mischiefs they may occasion.

The best book, or the most instructive conversation, will afford little pleasure or advantage, by being merely remembered, in comparison with what it might afford by exciting new reflections in the mind, which lead to a new train of thought, and make the riches of others become in some sort its own. Without this every kind of study will be dull and uninteresting, because it will only fill the memory without improving the mind, or affecting the heart.

A new language will only furnish a new set of words; but by comparing it with those already

known, it might afford means of explaining our sentiments and ideas more distinctly, and perhaps of setting things in a clearer light, even to ourselves.

The study of any branch of philosophy, instead of being merely an employment for the memory, may lead to new observations and discoveries, and raise the mind by degrees to contemplations of a far higher kind.

History, instead of supplying us only with the knowledge of facts, may give us a farther insight into the human heart, and furnish many useful observations in regard to our conduct in life, if we accustom ourselves to seek the remote causes of great events, and trace to their source the secret springs of action, which will often be found far different from what at first sight they appear to have been.

Poetry, from a trifling amusement, may be raised to a pleasure of the highest kind, if it make us feel more strongly the exalted sentiments which it expresses, and elevate the mind to a contemplation of its native dignity, and a consciousness of powers for enjoyment beyond what any thing in this world can satisfy.

By such methods as these, some kind of improvement may be found in almost every study, besides that which is its immediate object: and a consciousness of improvement is a never-failing source of pleasure.

The same method might also often be applied to the common occurrences of private life. Whenever improvement is really the object of pursuit, numberless opportunities for attaining it (too generally overlooked) will be continually presenting themselves; and it is astonishing to observe how often such opportunities are lost, from mere inattention, and for want of being accustomed to look within ourselves. Those who are continually employed in endeavouring to display their talents to others, will scarcely ever do this to any purpose; their attention is engaged by what they wish to appear to be, not by what they really are: and this is often carried so far, that they impose upon themselves as well as others: and while this deception continues, the evil is without a remedy, and all hope of improvement must be entirely at a stand.

There is indeed hardly any thing so fatal to improvement of every kind, as the practice which too generally prevails in the world, of substituting appearances in the place of realities: and those instructions which teach the art of doing this (however plausible they may appear in many instances) will be found to be far more pernicious than at first sight would be imagined, not only by setting up another object of pursuit in the place of real improvement, and teaching a continual habit of deceit, but also by bringing true merit into discredit. Those who are conscious that they are

acting a part themselves, will always be apt to suspect others of doing the like; and those who can find means of acquiring the reputation of merit of any kind, which they do not possess, will hardly be at the trouble afterwards of endeavouring to acquire the reality.

In solitude, there is much less danger of self-deceit. Our thoughts are not dissipated by a variety of objects, nor employed in endeavouring to gain the good opinion of others; nor is the judgment we form of ourselves made dependent on that opinion, as it sometimes happens in society, especially when we have any reason to believe that it inclines to the side most favourable to our vanity. We must then feel and improve those powers which we possess, in order to enjoy them; and for this reason, as well as many others, it may be highly useful to all to be sometimes accustomed to solitude; especially in the early part of life, while the mind enjoys its full vigour, and the spirits are not broken by sickness and affliction; they will then find the resources which they possess, and learn that it is possible to amuse and improve themselves.

Probably a time will come when solitude will be unavoidable, or when from distaste to society, or many other causes, it may appear desirable. But to those who have never been accustomed to enjoy the pleasures and advantages it might afford, it will then (in all probability) be a painful and

dangerous situation. Unconscious of those resources which they might have found within themselves, and unaccustomed to intellectual pleasures, they will hardly be able to acquire a relish for them at a time when the spirits, and perhaps the temper, are impaired by the disappointments and mortifications of society. They will be apt to dwell on discontented thoughts, and fancy themselves better than the rest of the world, merely because they are weary of it, till their benevolence is weakened by continually viewing every thing in the worst light, and they grow proud of the faults of others, not of their own good qualities.

In such a state of mind, no advantage will be gained by being obliged to take a nearer view of their own character and conduct; for instead of comparing themselves with that degree of excellence which they might have attained, they will form their judgment by a comparison of themselves with the unfavourable opinion they have formed of others; and their ill-humour, as well as their vanity, will secure to themselves the preference, yet will deprive them at the same time of any satisfaction this preference might afford; for their ill-humour will make them a burthen to themselves, and their vanity will make them eager to gain the applause of others, and be continually mortified and disappointed at finding they do not succeed. Thus the gloom of solitude will be added to the disgusts of society; the pleasures of the one will be lost, and those of the other unknown or unenjoyed.

It is impossible to enumerate the pleasures which a thinking mind may find within itself, or the advantages which may be derived from them; they are far beyond all description, and can only be known by being enjoyed. Indeed from a difference of character and circumstances, they may perhaps be different in every person; but every one who seeks them will probably find that he may enjoy much more than he had any notion of.

How delightful might it be to trace to ourselves the image of all that is most beautiful and pleasing in nature, to renew the impression which such objects have formerly made upon the mind, and then endeavour to improve in imagination upon what we have seen;—to observe the causes of those effects which we see, as far as they are obvious to our notice, and try to discover those which are yet unknown to us;—to recall such past events as have afforded us true pleasure, and to anticipate such as we may hereafter hope for; or paint to ourselves scenes more pleasing than any we have ever yet known, or probably shall ever find in this world;—to soar beyond the bounds of space and time, and try to catch a glance at objects which are far beyond our present powers of comprehension;—in short, to exert the powers of the mind, to enjoy and improve those faculties by which man is distinguished from the inferior creation; to feel that they are independent on outward objects, and rejoice in the consciousness of the dignity of our nature!

Every amiable quality and disposition of the heart, all that is good and pleasing in society, may also, in a certain degree, be exercised in imagination, and cultivated and enjoyed in solitude.

Our gratitude may be employed in recollecting the kindnesses we have received; we may still dwell with pleasure on the sentiments they excite, though deprived of the power of expressing them.

Our humility may be exercised, by taking a nearer view of our own imperfections, undisguised by that false colouring which our passions are apt to throw over them, when we are engaged in society; while, at the same time, the sense of our own weakness teaches us to be more indulgent to that of others.

Our candour may be employed, in driving away the prejudices through which we are apt to view their words and actions, when they happen to wound our pride, or oppose our pursuits. While we feel ourselves hurt, we are apt to aggravate the fault of the offender, which perhaps, if considered in its true light, and ascribed to its true motive, would appear to be no fault at all.

Our benevolence may be exerted, in contriving schemes to do good to others, which, even though they should never take effect, will still afford a pleasing exercise to the mind, and contribute to preserve that heavenly disposition in its full vigour, and make us more ready to pursue and embrace all such opportunities as may afterwards be found.

Thus every virtue may, in some sort, be exercised, even when all the apparent means of exercising them are taken away; for our thoughts may still be employed in considering in what manner we should wish to act in various circumstances and situations; and by such means as these, we may improve ourselves in every thing that is good and valuable, and enjoy, in some degree, the good effects of actions which it may never be in our power to perform.

While the thoughts acquire an habit of viewing things in their true light, the pleasures of goodness are felt, and the conduct it would dictate is impressed on the heart, and may remain ready to be called forth to action on future occasions, in spite of the opposition which present objects and passions may make to it.

What improvement as well as satisfaction may it afford us, to form to ourselves the most exalted representation of every virtue—free from every human frailty and imperfection, and raised far beyond what we have found in real life;—to contemplate them in their greatest excellence;—to feel our minds elevated and our hearts warmed by the representation, while our most earnest desires are excited to attain that perfection which we admire; and every difficulty which can oppose our efforts, and every suffering which may attend them, appear trifling on the comparison, and unworthy of the attention of an immortal mind.

Then to consider the great and glorious purposes for which that mind was intended; the joys which alone can satisfy it; the extent of its powers; and the eternity of its duration!

In such contemplations as these, the soul seems to expand itself, and enjoy its native excellence; it feels itself raised above the little objects of this world, and seems to make some approach to that happiness for which it was formed, and which, even in the midst of all that present enjoyments can bestow, and in spite of a thousand disappointments, it must for ever pursue; while the powers and the hopes it feels, afford an earnest of joys which are calculated to satisfy them—for surely they were not given in vain.

ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

THERE is no precept in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour delivered more positively than this, "BE YE PERFECT." It is addressed to all, no exception is made in favour of any, and GOD does not require from us what we are unable to perform; yet when we consider the various talents bestowed upon mankind, and the different situations in which we are placed in this world, it seems scarcely possible that all should attain to an equal degree of excel-

lence. The powers and faculties of many are confined, the influence of most men extends but to a very small circle; and while they admire at a distance the virtues of those who have moved in a more exalted sphere, and by their actions or sufferings have benefited mankind, and done honour to the religion they profess, they are apt to imagine, that as these are heights of excellence to which they never can attain, those precepts which seem to require such exalted perfection cannot relate to them; that to aim at it would be attempting an impossibility; and that such endeavours must be left to those whose powers are greater, and whose influence is more extensive. Yet the precept is general, and therefore certainly cannot relate to any thing that is only in the power of a few.

What then is this perfection which is thus required of all, and which therefore certainly may be attained by the poor and dependent, the sick and helpless, as well as by the healthy and powerful, the rich and happy?—Perfection in any created being, must mean the highest degree of excellence which that being is capable of attaining; absolute perfection, in the strictest sense of the word, being an essential attribute of God alone. It must consist in the utmost exertion of those powers with which that being has been endued by his Maker, and in applying them all to the best purposes. But as the powers given to every different order of being, and probably to every individual, are diffe-

rent, the degree of excellence, which constitutes the perfection of every one, must also be different; and one who has exerted his little talents to the utmost, may be much nearer to perfection, than another in appearance greatly superior to him in excellence, but who had talents to have made him much more so, if he had employed them as he ought.

This must always occasion great uncertainty in the judgments we form of others, since we can never know the powers with which they are endued, nor the difficulties with which they are obliged to struggle, and therefore can never judge how near they have advanced to that perfection which it was in their power to attain. Perhaps the fault we think we have discovered in our neighbours, may have arisen from some motive unknown to us, which, in the eye of Him who sees the heart, may greatly lessen its malignity. Perhaps, through ignorance or prejudice, it may appear to him in a very different light from that in which we see it. Such considerations should make us very cautious in the judgments we pass upon others, and always inclined to hope the best, and to give the most favourable interpretation to every action; since for aught we know, it may be the most just.—But with regard to ourselves, the case is far different, and we are by no means liable to the same difficulties; since the fault we *see*, we certainly may endeavour

to amend; and if that endeavour be sincere, we may be certain that it will be assisted and accepted.

Some good we can all do; and if we do all that is in our power, however little that power may be, we have performed our part, and may be as near perfection as those whose influence extends over kingdoms, and whose good actions are felt and applauded by thousands. But then we must be sure that we do all we can, and exert to the utmost all those powers which GOD has given us; and this is a point in which we are very apt to deceive ourselves, and to shelter our indolence under the pretence of inability.

Let us then, in whatever situation of life we may be placed, consider attentively how we may improve it to the greatest advantage; let us never be discouraged by any difficulty which may attend what we know to be our duty; for if we do our best, we are secure of an All-powerful assistance; nor let us ever think any occasion too trifling for the exertion of our best endeavours, for it is by constantly aiming at perfection in every instance, that we may at length attain to as great a degree of it as our present state will admit.

Thus we may fulfil our blessed Saviour's command, in the meanest as well as in the most exalted situation in this world; and upon an attentive survey of every one, we may discover duties sufficient to require the exertion of our utmost powers, and many opportunities of doing good to ourselves

and others, which are apt to escape the eye of a superficial observer. And in that day when GOD shall judge the secrets of men's hearts, we shall probably see many, who have scarce been noticed in this world, distinguished amongst the most illustrious followers of their LORD, and preferred far before others, who while they lived were the general objects of reverence and admiration.

The poor man, weakened perhaps by sickness, and dejected by contempt, whose daily labours can hardly procure him a little pittance to support his wretched life, cannot indeed distinguish himself by any great actions or public benefits; he cannot feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked; but he can submit with patience and resignation to that state in which Providence has placed him; he can labour with integrity and diligence to improve it to the best advantage, and look up to GOD for a blessing upon his honest endeavours; he can instruct his children in all the good he knows, and be always ready to assist a neighbour in distress; and by so doing he may approve himself to the Searcher of Hearts, far more than those who perhaps have inwardly applauded their own benevolence, when they bestowed a trifle out of their superfluity to give a temporary relief to his distress. He may rise to a still more heroic degree of excellence, and lift up a secret prayer for the man who has refused him even that trifle; yet none will hear that prayer but He to whom it is addressed. Contempt, or at

best pity, will be his portion in this life; and probably it will never occur to any one who sees him, that he shall hereafter behold him with admiration and reverence—perhaps with envy.

Let not then the meanest imagine he can do nothing; he may be truly great, he may fulfil his LORD'S command, and be secure of his acceptance; but let him remember that every advantage must be gained by some effort, and that no situation can justify indolence and inactivity, or murmuring and repining. And let those who see his distress, but cannot see his heart, think in what manner they shall wish they had treated him, if they should see him hereafter approved and rewarded by the great Judge of men and angels.

But poverty is not the only situation which is pleaded as an excuse for the little good that is done; there are many who live dependent on the will of others, so that even their time is not at their own disposal. When this is really the case, and from the relation in which they stand, such dependence is indeed their duty, then cheerful submission is the virtue which their situation particularly requires; and a little experience will soon convince them that it is not one of those which is attained most easily; their own inclinations, even when just and reasonable, must often be sacrificed to the mere whims of another, and it will require the exertion of no small degree of virtue to be able to gain continual victories over themselves.

Let not those who are placed in such a situation, imagine that they can do nothing; their task is difficult and painful: and the more so, as they must not expect to be supported by the approbation of others, since in general the more perfect their virtue, the less it will be noticed; they will not tell the world that it costs them a continual struggle, and probably the world will never suspect it; but on the contrary, they will often be blamed for actions, which, if their true motives were known, would appear most deserving of applause.

Something of this sort may probably have been felt at times by all whose situation is in any degree dependent; but that dependence can never be so continual as to deprive them of all opportunities of acting for themselves, and benefiting others, and if such opportunities are rare, that consideration should incite them to exert the utmost diligence in seeking them out, and activity in making the most of them.

The same may be said in regard to all who complain in any respect of the narrow sphere to which they are confined. Let them examine it attentively, and constantly and diligently exert their utmost powers in doing all the good they can, and they will soon find that much more is in their power than they were apt at first to imagine; and this, not only by relieving the distresses of poverty and want, by being always ready to give comfort to the afflicted, and advice and assistance to those who stand in

need of them; but common conversation, and daily intercourse with the world, afford numberless opportunities of doing good, to those who are attentive to make the most of them.

A word in season may save the blush of bashful merit oppressed by the torrent of ridicule, or stop the progress of a report, repeated perhaps only from thoughtlessness, but which yet, when repeated a little farther, might stain the reputation of real worth.

A gentle answer may stop the violence of passion in its beginning, which a hasty word, and perhaps even silence might have aggravated, till the consequences became dreadful indeed.

To relate the distresses of those who cannot plead for themselves, may awaken the compassion of some who are able to relieve them, and perhaps not unwilling, but too indolent, or too much engaged in other pursuits, to seek out objects for themselves; nay, sometimes, if the application be made in public, it may gain from vanity what it would not have gained from benevolence; and thus the poor at least will be benefited, and possibly the rich will be so too; for those who have been induced to do good, though by a wrong motive, may yet find that there is a pleasure in it, and learn in time to love it for its own sake.

A judicious observation, a rational maxim, a generous sentiment, when unaffectedly introduced in the course of conversation, may make an impres-

sion on those who are not in the habit of thinking for themselves.

A thousand little attentions may exercise our own benevolence, and gain the good-will of others; perhaps too they may contribute in some degree to sooth the aching heart; for even the most trifling instance of kindness, which springs from true benevolence, can hardly fail of giving some pleasure to the receiver.

But it is impossible to enumerate the opportunities of doing good, which are continually offering themselves in conversation and the daily occurrences of life, in such things as are commonly called *little;* though indeed that appellation by no means belongs to them, since it is upon these principally that the happiness of society depends; and a want of attention to them is the source of continual uneasiness, and the chief cause of most of the unhappiness which disturbs the intercourse of private life.

The man of delicate sensibility, whose heart has received an unnecessary wound, has been more hurt by the person that gave it, than by him who robbed him of his purse; yet how often is this done without the least remorse, merely from the idle vanity of displaying a false wit, or a trifling talent for ridicule; or from a desire of assuming a superiority which is seldom assumed but by those who have no title to it.

Opportunities of giving pain are continually

presenting themselves; and to avoid them is as much a positive duty as to seek opportunities of doing good: both are alike the genuine effects of true benevolence, which perhaps shews itself in a still stronger light when it triumphs over vanity, by suppressing an ill-natured display of wit, than when it bestows relief to the distressed; since in this last instance, the pleasure attending on the action might alone be a sufficient inducement to it.

But while we are endeavouring to avoid giving pain to others, we should not be less cautious to guard against a disposition to take offence at every trifle, which is not less prejudicial to the pleasures and advantages of society. A want of delicacy, or perhaps merely a want of thought, may have given rise to the expression which displeases us; and if so, we have no more right to be offended, than we have when we suffer any harm by mere accident; since, in either of these cases, there certainly was no intention to hurt us. Such excuses as these we may often find reason to plead for others, but we can never plead them in our own case if we indulge ourselves in the slightest word or look that may give pain to another; since the first is what nobody will own, and a consciousness of the last would be a contradiction in terms. Thus reason and justice, as well as benevolence, and regard to the good of society, require us to make great allowance for others, and very little for ourselves.

It may possibly be objected, that all this requires an uncommon degree of reflection and presence of mind; that such continual watchfulness must restrain the freedom of conversation; and that it is impossible to be always upon our guard. But such objections seem to suppose a continual struggle with a bad heart; whereas he who aims at perfection, must begin his business there; for while any bad dispositions are encouraged, it is vain to hope that they will not sometimes shew themselves in words and actions; and it would be a difficult task indeed always to put on the appearance of benevolence, while the reality is wanting. But were the heart full of love and gratitude to its Creator, and true benevolence to its fellow-creatures, it would find in itself the source of all that is good and pleasing in society, and then there would be nothing more to do but to follow its dictates.

To attain to this perfection, and to conquer all those selfish passions which oppose it, should be our constant aim, and must indeed require no inconsiderable efforts; but it is an object well worthy the exertion of our utmost powers, and it may be observed for our encouragement, that at every step the difficulties will lessen; the heart will feel the *pleasure* of benevolence, while reason and religion recommend the *duty;* every opportunity of exercising it will increase this pleasure, and consequently the passions will become less and less able to contend with it, till at last they are obliged

to yield, not so much to reason as to a stronger inclination: and then the exercise of benevolence becomes not the result of reflection, but an indulgence of the bent and inclination of the heart.

To one of this character it would require no effort to avoid giving pain to others, since that would be the greatest pain he could himself receive. The little vanity of displaying a trifling superiority, or gaining a momentary applause, could be no inducement to him, since the feelings of his own heart would make him blush while he received it, from a consciousness that he might have deserved applause of a much higher kind.

In short, to say that the exercise of this branch of benevolence, which relates to the little occurrences of common conversation, must lay us under a continual restraint, is in effect to say that some other inclination is more powerful in the heart; and while that is cherished and encouraged, it is in vain to hope that it will not prevail, and perhaps in time quite extinguish that heavenly spark, which, properly cultivated, might have been a source of happiness to ourselves and others. To improve this should be the constant business of every one, in every different situation in life; for though its exercises are various, and though in this world they cannot always afford an equal degree of pleasure, yet the principle from which they all flow is still the same; and it is the principle which should be cultivated and improved here, and which will be accepted and rewarded hereafter.

There is yet another situation, which, more than all those hitherto mentioned, seems to damp all the powers of the soul, and exclude all means of doing good to ourselves or others, and that is sickness.

When the body is weakened by pain, the thoughts confused, and the spirits sunk, we are apt to think it is no time to aim at perfection, and that we are incapable of making any effort towards it; yet even here we should remember, what has been all along observed, that the perfection required of us consists in exerting to the utmost those powers which we possess, however small they may be. In such a state we cannot indeed act as we would have done in the days of health and strength, but we can still constantly and sincerely endeavour to do our best.

In this, as in every other situation, we should remember that to avoid giving pain is as much an act of benevolence as to do real good. An impatient word, or even a groan, may wound the heart of a friend who has been watching night and day to give you ease and comfort: suppress it, and you will have prevented a pang, greater perhaps than that which you relieve when you give bread to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty. An expression of fretfulness at the little inadvertencies of attendants may discourage well-meant endeavours, while a different conduct might still incite them to do more, and possibly in time might teach those who at first were guided merely by interest, to act upon a better motive.

Such opportunities of doing good may yet be found; and if such exertions are attended with some difficulty, let us remember, that to conquer that difficulty is a chief part of the perfection which such a state admits.

True christian fortitude and patience must be founded on a sincere love of God, and an affectionate filial resignation to his will; and such a disposition must necessarily include benevolence towards all mankind, an active principle which pain and sickness never can extinguish.

Let us not then imagine that excess of *suffering* can be an excuse, if we are conscious that we give any pain to others, which might have been avoided; since it can only be so for those who are not conscious of it, when it forces from their weakness expressions which they afterwards recollect with pain, and wish they could recall; for it must be allowed, that in such a situation it *is* difficult to be always upon our guard.

But though this may give reason to hope that great allowances will be made, yet it can be no excuse for not exerting our best endeavours; and it is a very powerful motive to induce us to cultivate, whilst we are in health, that heavenly benevolence, which, were it once, as it ought to be, the habitual disposition of the soul, would remain so in every situation in life, and find continual opportunities of exerting itself, even in the midst of pain and sickness, of poverty and affliction.

It would be endless to enumerate the variety of situations in which inability to do good is pleaded as an excuse for the little that is done, and that not always by the indolent alone: for there reigns in the world a certain prejudice in favour of such actions as are attended with apparent good effects, which it is very difficult for any one entirely to shake off: and it may have happened to many, whose intentions were yet sincerely good, to be discouraged by the little apparent good that is in their power, and by the disappointments they have met with in their endeavours to do even that little.

But let such remember, that it is the intention, not the success, which constitutes the merit of any action; and whatever present pleasure they may lose by the disappointment of their honest endeavours, will, with infinite advantage, be made up to them hereafter.

They should also consider, that the applause of man, and even the secret self-approbation which attends a successful good action, is not without its danger. Vanity is ever apt to steal in, and taint even our best performances, and that not only in such actions as are seen by the world, for there may be a vanity even in our own applause: and when they find their best endeavours disappointed, and their greatest kindnesses received with indifference and repaid with ingratitude, let them not be discouraged, but still go on in the blessed

course in which they are engaged, constantly endeavouring to discover and improve every opportunity of doing good, however little it may appear, though no eye see them, and no voice applaud them.

He who is higher than the highest, will mark their diligence, and crown hereafter their sincere endeavours, though He may see fit to humble them with disappointments here, and deprive them of the satisfaction of enjoying the good they do.

Indeed such disappointments, if rightly used, will serve to improve and secure their virtues, by exalting them above the influence of all meaner motives, and teaching them to exert their utmost endeavours, not with a view to any present enjoyment, but with a sincere and earnest desire to please Him who will not fail to accept and bless an unwearied perseverance in well-doing.

It may also be observed, for their comfort and encouragement, that we are very bad judges of the success of our endeavours; and if we do not immediately perceive any good effect from them, we have no reason from thence to conclude that they will have none.

You have been endeavouring perhaps to comfort the afflicted, and you have been heard without attention or even with impatience; yet be not discouraged: a little reflection may give weight to what you have said, and a perseverance in the friendly endeavour may in time make an impres-

sion upon the heart, and recall it in some degree to a sense of pleasure: for surely no one can be so entirely overwhelmed with grief, as to receive no pleasure from the expressions of real kindness, or to be quite insensible to that tender, unwearied attention to give ease and comfort, which flows from an affectionate and benevolent heart: and when the mind is once awakened from the lethargy of grief, it will by degrees become more composed, and be capable of listening to the comforts of reason and religion.

You have, it may be, been giving some good advice, which in appearance produced no other effect than that of displeasing the person to whom it was addressed; yet you know not what impression it may have made. Our pride is apt to rise at first against the very thought of being advised; yet if the advice was given in such a manner as shewed it to be the effect of real kindness and good-will, not of any desire of assuming a superiority, it may probably be remembered and examined afterwards. Reason may approve what pride at first rejected, and the advice may have its weight, though the person who gave it may never be informed of his success.

The same observation might be made in many other instances: and whoever sincerely endeavours to do all the good he can, will probably do much more than he imagines, or will ever know, till the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest.

To decline any difficulty which lies in the way of our duty, under pretence of inability to conquer it; to refuse engaging in any good and virtuous undertaking, from a fear that we shall not succeed in it; are certainly the effects of cowardice, not of humility.

We know not our powers till we exert them, and by exertion we may be very certain they will improve; but indolence is glad of an excuse, and pride fears the mortification of a defeat; and thus every noble and generous effort is discouraged, and the mind sinks into a state of inactivity, quite opposite to that diligent and ardent endeavour after perfection which should be the constant business of our lives.

It is by this endeavour we fulfil the precept of our BLESSED SAVIOUR. We cannot indeed at once attain to perfection, but the attainment of it may be our constant aim in the smallest as well as in the most important actions of our lives; and that not only in those duties which more immediately belong to our station in the world, but in every instance which may be within our power.

In whatever situation we may be placed, let us not inquire what allowances may be made for us, nor how much we must do that we may hope for acceptance. But let us consider what is the best that we can do; for we certainly have not performed our duty, when we are conscious that we might have done better.

Let us endeavour to impress upon our hearts such a lively sense of the kindness of our Infinite Benefactor, as may prompt us to embrace every opportunity of expressing our love and gratitude towards Him. We shall not then be disposed to confine the circle of our duties; but on the contrary it will be our earnest desire to extend it as far as possible, that we may enjoy, in every instance, the delightful thought of acting for his sake, and making the best return in our power to the infinite obligations we have received.

This will diffuse a sort of heavenly pleasure over the most trifling circumstances in our lives, since even in these we may still endeavour to do our best, from a desire to please Him; and that desire, we may be very certain, will always be accepted.

If this influence our conduct in the daily occurrences of life, every incident that befals us will contribute to bring us nearer to perfection, by furnishing a fresh opportunity for the exertion of our utmost endeavours to attain it. Every little difficulty we conquer will increase our fortitude; every attempt to do good, even in the smallest instance, will strengthen our benevolence: even the faults we may fall into, though they humble us under the sense of our weakness, yet instead of discouraging, they will serve to excite us to redouble our diligence, since we are certain that, if we will sincerely endeavour to avoid them for the fu-

ture, we may depend on the Divine Mercy to assist our weakness, and pardon our imperfection.

The afflictions we may meet with will be brightened by the thought that they are sent by an All-gracious Father, who would not permit them but for our real advantage; and therefore they certainly may be so, if we make a right use of them. Instead of sinking under them, we shall look up to Him with filial confidence; and, rejoicing in his all-powerful protection and assistance, not only submit without murmuring, but even be thankful for the trial, and constantly endeavour so to receive it, that it may answer the gracious purposes for which it was designed.

By resigning our own will, on every little occasion, when it opposes that of our Maker, we shall learn to do so in the greatest; and by constantly aiming at perfection, even in the smallest instances, we shall make daily advances towards it, till at last we arrive at that blessed state, where all our imperfections shall be done away; and perfect goodness, and perfect happiness, shall reign for ever.

ON RESIGNATION.

RESIGNATION is a constant, habitual disposition of mind, by which the true Christian is prepared to give up his own inclination in every instance, whether great or small, whenever the will of GOD requires that he should do so.

To submit with patience to what we cannot avoid, and resign with cheerfulness what we cannot keep, has been the advice of the wise in every age; but without some motive to enable us to do so, such lessons generally produce little effect.

To make the best of evils for which we can discover no remedy, and no consolation, is a painful effort, which often wears out the spirits it pretends to support.

Religion alone can enable us to practice that resignation which it requires, and to practice it in every instance; for we are much too apt to deceive ourselves by a false kind of resignation, which is exerted only on particular occasions, and which in fact is often nothing more than the sacrifice of one inclination to another that is more dear to us; and he who has resigned an empire may be as far from that resignation of the will which the Christian religion requires, as he who has usurped one; and he may be as easily overcome by the little trials which continually arise in common life.

True Resignation must be founded on a principle which never can be shaken; it must be a real sentiment of the heart, inspired by a motive sufficient to excite and to support it; and this can be no other than a sincere love of God, and that firm confidence which is inspired by the consideration that all events are in the hands of Him, whose wisdom and goodness are infinite as his power.

No comfort can spring from the thought that the evils we suffer are unavoidable; and the unwilling submission, which yields to a power it is unable to resist, is far unlike the true resignation of a Christian. An apparent calm may, in the one instance, disguise the secret murmurs of the heart, or perhaps a painful effort may compel the violence of passion to give place to the stillness of despair; but in the other, the stroke, however deeply felt, is yet willingly endured; and a firm and affectionate confidence, which no affliction can remove, inspires that sincere resignation, which triumphs over the feelings of nature, though it cannot destroy them, and always rejoices in the thought that an Almighty Friend will dispose all events as shall be most for the real interest of those who truly love Him and depend upon Him, however painful their trials may at present appear.

The effects of this resignation are not only a peace, which grief itself cannot take away, and constant readiness to submit to every dispensation of Providence; but also an active and vigorous re-

solution, which willingly undertakes the most painful exertion, and performs the task assigned, whatever struggle it may cost. It is always ready to sacrifice whatever is most dearly valued, when the will of GOD requires it; and finds a secret satisfaction even in the most painful exertions, from the consideration of Him for whose sake they are made.

To feel and to enjoy the innocent pleasures which our situation in this world affords, is not only natural but laudable. The pleasing as well as the painful circumstances of life are intended for our real advantage; and the same disposition of mind, which resigns them readily when the will of GOD requires it, will also enjoy them while HE bestows them, and enjoy them with a security which others can never feel; since the thought of their uncertainty (that constant alloy to every earthly pleasure) is always attended with a full conviction, that they will be enjoyed as long as is really best for us, and that an all-powerful assistance will enable us to support their loss.

This then is the distinguishing character of true resignation:——It does not consist in giving up any particular thing which we loved and valued: it is not a virtue which is only to be called forth to action on extraordinary occasions;—but it is a constant and settled disposition of mind, ever ready to conform to the will of GOD in every instance: to enjoy the pleasures, or submit to the afflictions, which He sends, and to act or suffer, as the duties

of every different situation may require.—It is the only sure foundation of patience, fortitude, self-denial, generosity, and all those virtues by which a victory is gained over our own inclinations. Other motives may inspire them in particular instances, but they can never be practised constantly and universally, but by those whose will is sincerely resigned to the will of their Creator.

He who has borne some considerable loss, or great degree of pain, with calm resolution, may grow fretful and uneasy at the little disgusts and mortifications of society.—He who has gone through the most difficult trials with that active courage which engages universal admiration, may fear to oppose the current of general practice in trifles, when he thinks he shall be despised for so doing. And he who has denied himself numberless indulgences to assist the distressed, may yet find it difficult to give up his particular fancies and inclinations, however necessary the sacrifice may be. But none of these things can happen, where the heart is sincerely and universally resigned.

The most painful sufferings are patiently endured, the darling inclination is readily and willingly given up, whatever anguish the sacrifice may cost, whenever the will of God requires it: and when that will requires sacrifices of another kind, the little comforts, conveniencies, and amusements of common life; the kindness which soothed our afflictions, or the applause which supported our reso-

lution; every thing, in short, whatever it may be, which we are called upon to resign, is then the object, in regard to which that virtue is to be exercised; and the heart in which that disposition reigns, is equally prepared for all.

We deceive ourselves greatly, if we imagine that an extraordinary exertion of resignation in one instance may dispense with it in others which appear to us trifling; on the contrary, if ever we find it wanting on those little occasions, we have reason to suspect that the seeming exertion of it in greater matters was in reality owing to some other motive.

Much may be resigned by those who are far indeed from having resigned their will: and the little trials which pass unnoticed by all the world, are often the surest test of our sincerity, and may be the most useful to subdue our perverse inclinations, and bring us to that state of mind which our duty requires.

That the exertions of this virtue are often painful, cannot be denied. Our duty may require us to make great and voluntary sacrifices which we might have avoided, or to submit to injuries and humiliations which we might have prevented; though even here it is possible, that the indulgence of our inclinations might in the end have been productive of much greater sufferings than the denial of them. But in general it is exerted in regard to

such evils as we cannot prevent; and, according to the observation of Dr. YOUNG,

> "That duty gives up little more
> "Than anguish of the mind."

It is an act of love and confidence which rests in full security on an all-wise and all-powerful *friend;* and, considered in this view, it is a disposition pleasing in the highest degree, which softens all the miseries of life, and converts the most painful trials into opportunities for expressing sentiments which are always felt with pleasure,—such pleasure as no affliction can ever take away.

The sacrifice was perhaps unavoidable; but whether necessity or duty required it, to a heart truly resigned, the case is just the same; in the last, it will indeed be attended with peculiar satisfaction; but in the first, the manner in which it is received may make it equally a voluntary act. The same sentiments may be expressed, and will most certainly be accepted, the same comforts may sooth our sorrows, and the same assistance will support us under them. Considered in this view, resignation is a state of mind indispensably necessary to secure our happiness in this world.

It has been the advice of many, that in our happiest days we should consider the uncertainty of the good things we possess; look forward to the time when we must be deprived of them; and prepare ourselves beforehand to support their loss, by

anticipating the pain we shall then feel, and rendering the mind in some sort familiar to it, that we may be better able to sustain the shock when it comes: thus securing to ourselves a certain present pain, in order to lessen one which is future and uncertain. Perhaps it may not produce even this good effect, since dwelling on the thought of sorrows must certainly by degrees wear out the spirits, and render us less able to support them when they come.

True resignation teaches us another method of preparing ourselves for afflictions; and while, in every pleasure, we feel and enjoy the goodness of an indulgent Father, it rests on Him with full confidence, and is ready to acquiesce in the most painful dispensations which the same goodness shall ordain for us:—it does not anticipate evils, nor allay our pleasures; but it is a disposition of mind which enables us to support the one, and enjoy the other.

Afflictions must come: no efforts can avoid them, or destroy the sense of them; patience may endure them; but patience, where the heart is not resigned, is a continual struggle with ourselves. True resignation alone furnishes us with a sure resource; it submits with sincere and affectionate confidence, and casts all our care on Him who careth for us. It is also conducive to happiness, not only by giving peace and security to our pleasures, and comfort to our afflictions, but also by lessening the number of those afflictions.

An attachment to our own will is one great source of the sorrows of this life. The heart which is truly resigned, will find no pain or difficulty in many things which to others would be made matter of real sorrow; it yields easily to the present state of things; complies with the inclinations of *others*; and gives up its fancies or its pleasures cheerfully and readily, as these are never its principal point in view.

Numberless little compliances are necessary in the daily intercourse of life. To the selfish, these are matter of continual mortification and uneasiness; for a trifle which opposes the will of those who are accustomed to consider their own will in every thing, becomes a matter of importance; but where resignation is become habitual, such things make little or no impression; they are performed with ease, and even with pleasure.

In order to the attainment of this disposition, *it* is highly necessary to impress strongly upon our minds a deep sense of the wisdom and goodness of the ALMIGHTY; of our own blindness and inability to judge what is really best for us, and of the happiness of being in his hands.

Who can look back on his past life, without being sensible that the disappointment of his wishes has often been of real advantage to him? A very little attention must be sufficient to convince us, how apt we are to be misled by our own passions and prejudices, and how little we know of the con-

sequences of those things which are at present the objects of our hopes and fears. How often has prosperity proved fatal to innocence and virtue, without bringing with it that happiness which it seemed to promise! And how many have been reduced to the painful conclusion, "that all is vanity!" when perhaps it was too late to begin a new course, and choose "the better part."

Could we look into the hearts of those whom the world calls happy, how different should we often find the reality from the appearance! In the midst of prosperity and success, some secret care, the disappointment of some darling wish, or even the languor and disgust which sometimes attend satiety, and destroy the relish of pleasure, may be as real evils, and as destructive of happiness, as those sufferings which are generally the objects of compassion.

We know not what we wish: and the indulgence of our wishes would often prove the source of misery even in this world; but as to what tends most to our improvement in what is truly valuable—the state which is most calculated to exercise and improve our virtues, and lead us to eternal happiness, we are still more in the dark.

Not only reason and observation of others, but our own feelings and experience, may convince us of this; and shew us, even at present, that we have great cause to rejoice that all events are in better hands than ours: though this is a truth which will

probably be more fully explained to us hereafter, when we can at one view take in the whole series of the events of our lives, and know their consequences.

Convinced of this great truth, let us cultivate those sentiments which it ought to produce, that love and confidence which such a conviction should inspire; and these will naturally produce true and sincere resignation.

But as we are not always in a state of mind to have recourse to a train of reasoning; and even the real sentiments of the heart do not always act with the same force, but may be obscured for a time by passion, and the strong impression of present objects; it is of the utmost consequence to us to endeavour to render every virtue familiar and habitual by continual exercise; and there is none for which more frequent opportunities present themselves, than for this of resignation.

Not a day can pass over us without bringing with it some things which are not exactly what we could wish; and all these, however trifling, may have their use, if we receive them as we ought. All may exercise resignation, and help to keep us in a state of mind prepared for greater trials. The bad effects of the contrary are often evident; for how often do we see the good-humour of the morning, and consequently the happiness of the day, destroyed by trifles; and if the good effects they might produce are not as immediately apparent, they are not less real, nor less important.

The habit of submitting to little mortifications, from the best motives, and of endeavouring to improve by them, will insensibly connect those ideas with every mortification; and the happy effects of this may extend to matters of the greatest consequence, and be felt at a time when the mind is too much affected to seek for comforts which are not familiar to it.

But above all, in order to the attainment of true and constant resignation, it is highly necessary to keep up a frequent intercourse with Heaven by the exercises of devotion. We must offer up to God our hopes and wishes, and beg of him that assistance which alone can support our weakness, and which will never be denied to those who sincerely seek for it.——It is by true devotion, constantly felt and exercised, that true resignation can be fully attained. This furnishes a resource in every sorrow, a support in every trial; and where this is truly felt, the heart may indeed be resigned in regard to the events of this world, since its best affections, its most ardent wishes, are fixed on another.

In the Holy Scriptures we find the necessity and importance, and also the happiness, of resignation, set forth in the strongest terms. Our blessed Saviour calls us to take up our cross, and follow him, —to be ready to sacrifice all that is most dear to us, even life itself, if we would be worthy of Him.

The Christian life is represented as a state of

warfare, in which we must endure hardships as faithful soldiers, and through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven. At the same time we have the most comfortable assurances of assistance and support, and the most engaging invitations to the performance of this duty.

He who invites us to take his yoke upon us, at the same time assures us, that in so doing we shall find rest to our souls. We are called to cast our burden upon the LORD; we are assured that He will never leave us nor forsake us; that our prayers shall be heard, and under the shadow of *his* wings we may rejoice. We are promised assistance which can never fail, and joy which no man can take from us.

And while we are thus invited to resign ourselves to the will of GOD, and furnished with the most powerful motives to support our resignation; we have at the same time the most perfect pattern of that virtue in Him who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; and who yet came not to do his own will, but was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Such is the lesson that the whole tenor of Scripture inculcates, and such the example by which it is enforced! Happy are they on whom these considerations make their due impression; whose hearts are truly resigned, and who are always prepared for the exercise of that virtue on every different occasion!

The exercise of virtue, in many instances, is attended with such pleasures, that even those who are not influenced by a sense of duty and religion, can hardly be insensible to them; though such pleasures are enjoyed in a far higher degree by those in whom these sentiments prevail. Happy in the thought that their own inclination is then conformed to the will of their Creator, they "go on their way rejoicing" in the good effects of their endeavours; they see distress relieved, and virtue promoted; they give comfort to the afflicted, and advice to the ignorant; and enjoy the innocent pleasures of friendship and society, by making them useful to themselves and others. Their happiness is a kind of foretaste of the happiness of heaven—a happiness which angels might partake, and in which they may indulge their inclination without restraint, free from any apprehension of that satiety and disgust which often attend the pleasures of this world, or that remorse by which they are often succeeded. To such pleasures, we are apt to think we can hardly be too much attached; and yet even these we may be called to resign; and to murmur and repine may be as much an instance of the want of true resignation in this as in any other case.

We think our inclinations were innocent, and even laudable; and this seems in some sort to justify regret at being no longer able to indulge them; but our inclinations can be innocent no longer than they are conformable to the will of God; any far-

ther attachment to them becomes an attachment to our own will, which it is as much our duty to conquer in this case, as in every other.

We delighted to relieve distress; but we are reduced to poverty, and can enjoy that delight no more;—another task is now assigned us, and must be performed with the same readiness.

We possessed the power of making those happy, with whom by duty and affection we were connected; and our lives were spent in the pleasing and laudable employment:—a change of circumstances has taken that power away; no selfish regret must be so far indulged as to make us neglect the duties which are yet within our power, and become less diligent in performing the part allotted to us, because it is less pleasing.

We enjoyed the pleasures of friendship and society, and felt the innocent satisfaction which attends on the exercise and improvement of the benevolent affections;—but friends may be removed from us; we may be reduced to a state of unavoidable solitude, or rendered, by sickness or other circumstances, incapable of contributing to the pleasure of conversation and society, and reduced to give pain, where we most wish to confer happiness. Still the same disposition must remain; still the regret of pleasure lost, of whatever kind that pleasure might be, will be an instance of the want of true resignation, whenever it is indulged so far as to make us in any degree negligent of present du-

ties—for that pleasure is the sacrifice we are then called to make.

Such sacrifices are difficult and painful indeed; and the loss of innocent and virtuous pleasures must be strongly felt by those whose hearts were disposed to delight in them. While within their reach, it was their duty to enjoy them; and the loss of them is attended with the loss of that self-satisfaction, and even of that improvement of good and amiable dispositions, which was derived from them.

But little do we know, in this frail and imperfect state, what tends most to our improvement; and a situation which appears to us most unfavourable to it, may be such as is really best for us. Such indeed we may be sure it is, when infinite wisdom and goodness has decreed it for us.

The mind of man is naturally active, and the active duties are always the most pleasing. Life, deprived of these, presents a blank, more difficult to support than even painful exertions which are attended with success and self-approbation. Virtue is then no longer its own reward; for silent suffering, when nothing else is in our power, affords no matter for exultation, but rather for the contrary, from the thought of the uselessness of such a life, which necessity itself seems hardly sufficient to justify.

Here then the importance of that true resignation, which religion inspires, appears in the strongest light, as well as the happiness attending on it.

That life which once appeared a blank is such no longer, for our time is still spent in the way most acceptable to our Creator. Had He required of us "some great thing," some painful and difficult exertion, it would certainly have been our duty to have performed it: perhaps we fancy we could have performed it with satisfaction; but are we sure that there would have been no mixture of self-complacence, or even of vanity, in this satisfaction? Let us try whether we find the same satisfaction of complying with His will in other instances.

If by sickness, the loss of any of our faculties, or any other cause, we are really deprived of the power of employing ourselves in any thing useful, and reduced to a state in which a great part of our time must necessarily be passed in doing nothing, it is evidently the will of God that it should be so; and we then conform to His will by submitting to it as we ought, as we do by performing the active duties when called to them; and we may still look up to Him with filial confidence, and enjoy those hopes which attend the good and faithful servant, who constantly and diligently performs the part assigned him, whatever that part may be.

Every change of circumstances serves only to vary the task we are called to perform, but should make no change in the disposition of the mind, by which alone we are acceptable in the sight of Him who seeth not as man seeth.

Even in the decay of our faculties by age or sick-

ness, the same disposition must be still preserved. The lively fancy, which amused our solitary hours, may be lost; the active spirits, which animated our conduct, and even contributed to the ardour of our devotion, may be impaired; and we may feel (in spite of all our efforts) that the earthly body presseth down the mind.

Perhaps there is hardly any instance in which it is more difficult to preserve a constant and sincere resignation than in this: yet even in this it may be still preserved, and may make our little remaining powers still useful to ourselves, and acceptable to our Creator; still that "peace which passeth all understanding," which nothing in this world can give or take away, may remain in the heart, in the midst of the decay of our bodily and even of our mental powers; and will do so, in a heart which has always been truly resigned to the will of God in every different state.

To bear the infirmities of age with proper sentiments, is a lesson which should be learnt in youth; not by anticipating evils which perhaps we may never be called to suffer, but by acquiring and exercising that resignation which is necessary in every state, and which, when rendered constant and habitual, will remain so in every change of circumstances; though it would be difficult indeed to acquire it in the days of weakness and decline, when the powers of action are in a great measure taken away, when every effort is painful, and when

bad habits have been so long rooted as scarcely to be overcome.

O my Creator and Redeemer! whose goodness to me shines forth as strongly in the afflictions Thou art pleased to send me, as in the blessings wherewith Thou hast surrounded me; may I enjoy thy blessings with a cheerful and a grateful heart, yet ever be ready to resign them when it shall be thy good pleasure to deprive me of them! And when Thou art pleased to prove me with afflictions, may I always receive them with patience and humility; remembering that they are sent by an indulgent Father, who permits them for my good, and who will assist and support me under them.

May I never indulge the least repining or discontented thought; but fixing my attention on those divine joys which Thou hast prepared for those who truly love Thee, may I ever be ready to resign what I most love and value, when thou shalt see fit to require it of me; and by a constant endeavour to conform my will to thine in all the changes of this world, may I at length, through thy infinite mercy, arrive at that heavenly kingdom, where Thou wilt crown our sincere, though imperfect obedience, with everlasting and unchangeable felicity?

ON THE DUTIES AND ADVANTAGES OF SICKNESS.

At a time when, by pain and loss of speech, I am, in a great degree, rendered incapable of enjoying the pleasures of this world, called off from the pursuits of life, and separated from society; the necessity of seeking for higher and more lasting pleasures must surely appear in the strongest light. In such a situation the objects which are apt to engage our attention in this world seem, in some sort, placed at a distance; leisure is given for reflection; and present pain, by taking away the relish for trifling pleasures, is a powerful call to raise the mind to joys which depend not on this world, and to enforce the necessity of seeking for comfort in an humble, but rational and well-grounded hope, "that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, may work for me an exceeding and eternal weight of glory." But in order to this it is not sufficient merely to *suffer*, since in that we are only passive, and the longest life spent with the severest suffering could have no merit in itself to entitle us to an eternity of happiness. In this, as in every other state, it is our business to improve our talent to the greatest advantage. It is vain to imagine that we could do better in a different situation. He who made us,

best knows how to dispose of us; we are not to choose our parts, but to endeavour to improve to the utmost those which he has assigned us; and he

> "Who does the best his circumstance allows,
> "Does well, acts nobly; Angels could no more."

Be it then our study, in every kind of suffering, to recollect the duties which more particularly belong to such a state, to arm ourselves against the difficulties and dangers to which it is most liable, and to consider the advantages which may be derived from it, if we improve it as we ought.

Our business in this world is—not to perform certain particular good actions, but to tend constantly to the utmost perfection of our nature;—to cultivate in our minds such a disposition as may fit us to obtain, and qualify us to enjoy, the eternal happiness of heaven; and this may be done in every situation in life;—for however various the duties may be which we are called to perform, yet while we act upon the same principle, they will all conduce to the same end. This principle should be a sincere love of God—not according to the wild fancies of enthusiasm—but such a love as makes us ardently endeavour to please Him, and conform ourselves to his will in every instance—a love which extends to all our fellow-creatures, and is the source of every heavenly disposition—of every good and benevolent action. Be it then our study to implant and cultivate this in our hearts,

and then our enjoyments or our sufferings in this world will only serve to vary the actions in which it will exert itself, since every state has its peculiar duties; by the performance of which we may express our love and gratitude to our Maker, and secure his favour and our own happiness.

In a state of suffering, submission to the divine will is the first duty which presents itself; and that, not merely such a submission as a poor worm of the earth must necessarily pay to its Almighty Creator, but such a submission as is due from an ignorant short-sighted creature to infinite wisdom and infinite goodness; to Him who knows far better than we do what is most for our real advantage; who loves us better than we love ourselves, and sends us no affliction but such as may, if rightly used, contribute to our happiness. This is the true resignation of a Christian; he pretends not to be insensible to sufferings, he does not affect to speak of them as matters of indifference, nor is he obliged to a constant struggle with himself in order to assume an appearance of that fortitude which he does not in reality possess. He considers them as sent for the most gracious purposes, and therefore he blesses the hand which strikes; he endeavours to receive them so that they may answer those purposes, and submits not only with resignation, but with joy.

How delightful is such submission, and what heavenly confidence does it inspire, to remember

that He who sends the trial has promised to assist and support us under it! But how contrary to such a spirit as this, is any degree of murmuring and repining at those trials which he sends; these are far different from the language of love and confidence, and if such should at any time escape, let us not endeavour to excuse ourselves by pleading excess of suffering, but let us humble ourselves under the sense of our imperfection, implore forgiveness and assistance, and endeavour to be more watchful for the future. If our hearts were truly resigned, all inclination to murmur would be entirely conquered, and still as we improve in that heavenly disposition, we shall find ourselves less inclined to complain of that, for which in reality we ought to be thankful; thus inward murmurs will be silenced as well as outward complaints, and then patience may indeed be said to "have her perfect work." But this is by no means the case, when complaints are suppressed (as it sometimes happens) by pride and a desire of appearing to suffer with patience, and of being admired by others for our fortitude. Our heart is apt to deceive us, and pride can assume a thousand forms, and often influences our actions, even where it is least suspected. Let us then often examine our own hearts, and try whether our resignation is constant and sincere; whether our endeavours to suffer with patience are the same at all times, even when we are sure that they will

pass unnoticed by all the world, or be considered as proofs that our sufferings are much less than in reality they are. Do we never endeavour to magnify them when they are over, in order to magnify our patience in supporting them? Or at least do we not feel mortified when we find them underrated?

To help us to conquer our pride is one of the great advantages of affliction; but it can never answer that purpose, if, instead of humbling ourselves under the hand of God, and endeavouring by a patient submission to approve ourselves to Him who sees in secret, our thoughts are employed in studying to display our fortitude, and gain the admiration of others, or in murmuring and repining when we meet with the contrary. Every affliction, every humiliation, of whatever kind it may be, which we meet with in this life, may be converted to a good or a bad purpose, according to the manner in which it is received. If we submit with meekness and patience, it will tend to improve those virtues in us, and make us more and more conformable to the blessed example of Him who was "made perfect through sufferings." But if the mind rebel against the trial, and we endeavour to shew ourselves superior to it, by a display of our imagined excellencies, or even to comfort ourselves in secret by indulging such thoughts, instead of increasing our humility, it will serve only to increase our pride; and let us always remember that we must account

for the abuse of our sufferings as well as of our blessings; both are alike the gifts of an all-gracious Father, dispensed for our real good, and to be improved by us to the greatest advantage. Every affliction he sends us is a lesson of humility; but how do we frustrate that gracious design, when suffering itself is made the subject of pride! It is vain to hope that such patience will ever be accepted and rewarded by Him who sees the heart.

But it sometimes happens that we can bear pain, sickness, or losses, with tolerable patience, yet repine in secret at the humiliating circumstances attending on those afflictions; for there is hardly any kind of suffering which does not bring with it some attendant mortification, little perhaps in appearance, yet often harder to bear than what the world calls greater trials. The state of dependence to which these things often reduce us, the want of delicacy in others, or even the difference of their feelings from our own, the misinterpretation of words and actions, and a thousand other circumstances, which it is impossible to enumerate, frequently add severe pangs to every suffering; and let us not imagine that we submit patiently, because we bear pain in silence, while we murmur in our hearts at the mortifications which attend it; for these, (when they are real, and not the work of our own imagination) are part of our trial, and as such must be received with resignation. This point requires much attention, and we should be very careful

that we do not add imaginary evils of our own making, to those which are the necessary attendants on our situation.

It is particularly necessary in a state of suffering to guard against a disposition to take offence. We feel that we stand in need of comfort and assistance; and if we indulge the imaginations of a discontented mind, we may be led to fancy that others might do more for us than is really in their power; we may be hurt at things which are not designed to hurt us; and when the mind is depressed by suffering, it is not so well able to struggle with such thoughts as soon as they arise, and to set things at once in their true light; and thus imaginary evils gain the force of real ones, and make an impression which often remains upon the mind, even after the cause of it is forgotten. This makes great watchfulness requisite, and strongly enforces the necessity of endeavouring, whilst we are in health, to accustom ourselves to view the actions of others in their most favourable light, and to check a disposition to take offence at trifles, which is too often encouraged under the name of delicacy, though surely by a strange abuse of words.

An earnest endeavour to do every thing in our power that may contribute to the advantage and happiness of others, is certainly a duty incumbent upon us in every situation in life—in a state of suffering as well as every other. Indeed the pain we must then unavoidably give to those whose affec-

tion inclines them to feel most for us, is an additional reason for exerting ourselves to the utmost in doing all we can to alleviate that pain, and embracing every opportunity which may yet be in our power to give comfort and satisfaction;—and though the means of doing this, in such a state, are in a great measure taken away, yet some such opportunities will still be found by those who sincerely and constantly seek for them.

The same benevolence which, in the days of health and prosperity, would have exerted itself in going about doing good to all within its reach, will, in the time of sickness and affliction, be expressed by a constant endeavour to suppress, as much as possible, every word or look that may give pain—by receiving with thankfulness every attempt to give ease and comfort, even though, by being ill-judged or ill-timed, it be in reality distressing; and by a thousand little attentions, which will make a much deeper impression on a feeling heart for being paid at such a time, and which at least will serve to shew that no sufferings of our own can make us indifferent to the happiness of others.

Where a selfish disposition reigns in the heart, it is usual to be insolent and yet dissatisfied in prosperity, and exceedingly depressed in adversity: whereas true benevolence enjoys to the utmost every blessing, by imparting it as far as possible, and furnishes a source of pleasure which pain and sorrow cannot take away, since every exertion of it must be

attended with satisfaction; and in some way or other, it may find means to exert itself in every state.

It is very necessary, in every kind of suffering, to guard against such a depression of spirits as may reduce us to a state of listlessness and inactivity; the Christian state is a life of action, and no suffering can be a sufficient reason for the wilful neglect of any known duty, which it is yet in our power to perform. We may be very certain that those imperfections, which are the effect of real weakness, will not be laid to our charge, and that no duties will be required of us which we are not able to perform; but, however little our abilities may be, if we do not exert them to the utmost, we can have no right to depend on that assistance which alone can support our weakness, or to hope that allowances will be made for our imperfections, in consideration of our sufferings. It is true that such exertions are often difficult and painful; but such considerations, instead of discouraging, should excite our diligence. A sincere endeavour to do our best is all that is required: this is always in our power, and this, we may be certain, will always be accepted. Indeed, it may be considered as one of the advantages of afflictions, that they continually afford new opportunities of expressing our love towards God, our entire submission to his will, and earnest desire to conform to it, however contrary to our inclinations; and if these sentiments are warm and active

in the heart, there will be a satisfaction in performing even the most painful duties in some respects superior to what can be felt in a more prosperous situation, since by those we give the strongest proofs of our love and gratitude, and where these are truly felt, there is a pleasure even in the endeavour to express them; and if we are still sensible of this pleasure, even in the time of pain and of affliction, it may be a good evidence of our sincerity, and may serve to confirm our hopes that we are the objects of the divine favour, and that every sorrow will prove a real blessing in the end.

An attentive observation of our conduct in such trials may also be of the greatest use, by helping us to know ourselves; for every change in our situation in this world, every new duty we are called to perform, and every difficulty we meet with, may give us a further insight into the true state and disposition of our minds than we could possibly gain, if our life went on in one uniform course, since in that case our conduct is very often much more the effect of habit than we are apt in general to imagine. Such an attention may indeed prove the means of discovering to us some mortifying truths: we may find our virtues less firm than we imagined before they were put to such trials; we may perceive bad dispositions lurking in our hearts, from which we supposed ourselves entirely free, or which we thought we had suppressed. Yet let us not be discouraged; such discoveries should *humble*, but not

deject us, since the moment we have discovered a fault in ourselves, and with sincere grief for what is past, and a firm resolution to endeavour to avoid it for the future, have implored the divine forgiveness and assistance, we may be assured that we have engaged almighty power and goodness on our behalf, that our endeavours will be supported and assisted, and that we shall conquer in the end, "if we faint not." Thus we may gain new strength by the discovery of our weakness, since every fall will excite us to redouble our diligence; and while we honestly endeavour to do our best, we may be certain that we shall be assisted and accepted, notwithstanding our many imperfections. And thus our sufferings may become useful to us, by being made the means of accustoming us to a continual watchfulness over ourselves, which in the hurry of business or pleasure we are too apt to neglect; but while we every moment *feel* our weakness, we are every moment reminded of the necessity of being always on our guard, and of continually looking up to heaven for support and assistance; and the good effects of such an habit may remain, and have a happy influence on the rest of our lives, when the sufferings to which it was owing are entirely removed.

The separation from the world, which is generally the consequence of every kind of affliction, may also be considered as one of the advantages attending on it. The pleasures and pursuits of this life are interrupted, the thoughts are necessarily

called home, and the objects which are apt to engage so much of our attention, being placed at a distance from us, may be viewed in their true light, stripped of that false colouring which imagination bestows on them. The reflections which this view of them must naturally occasion, can hardly fail to make some impression upon the mind; and this may prove a real and lasting advantage, by checking our too eager pursuit of the pleasures of this world, and teaching us to look for happiness where alone we can meet with such as no change in our situation can ever take away.

Those who are much engaged in this world, have little leisure for reflection, and often lose the habit of it; to be obliged to turn our thoughts upon ourselves may be an advantage of the greatest importance, if we improve it as we ought, and its good effects may have a happy influence on the remainder of our lives. But solitude has its dangers as well as its advantages; and while sickness or affliction lead us to reflect on the emptiness of all earthly pleasures, we should be very careful that we do not indulge our pride by a preference of ourselves to others on that account, and weaken our benevolence by acquiring an habit of viewing their actions in the most unfavourable light, and passing severe censures on those who are placed in a situation far different from our own. We cannot see their hearts, nor judge in what light these things may appear to them: but we shall lose all the advantage we might

have derived from solitude and suffering, if they prove the source of vain or uncharitable thoughts; they will then corrupt the heart, instead of amending it, and thus our afflictions may prove far more pernicious than our pleasures, since a dissipated state of mind is by no means so contrary to true goodness as an uncharitable one.

Amongst all the advantages which may be found to attend on a state of suffering, there is hardly any more remarkable than that of shewing us in the strongest light the connexion between our duty and our happiness, which in no other situation in life is equally apparent. In the days of health and prosperity, our pleasures, even our innocent pleasures, are apt to engage too much of our affection, and to draw off our thoughts from the Giver of them all. Many worldly advantages appear to attend on vicious actions, and tempt mankind from the paths of virtue by the prospect of present enjoyment; but in the time of suffering no alternative remains, but whether we will aggravate the present evil by murmuring and repining, or change it into a real blessing by receiving it as we ought. If our thoughts are continually employed in dwelling upon our sufferings, and representing them in the strongest light, we may magnify the smallest evils till they become matters of importance, and capable of destroying our peace of mind, and we may add numberless imaginary sorrows to those which are real and unavoidable; but we can never derive any degree of comfort or satisfaction from giving way to such

thoughts; and though perhaps it may sometimes be difficult to resist them, yet we may be assured that the indulgence of them will prove much more painful in the end. By representing to our imagination the pleasures which we might have enjoyed in a different situation, and continually repining at the want of them, we may deprive ourselves of all those which are yet left us: and by murmuring and impatience we may become a burthen to our friends as well as to ourselves, and thus we may increase our present sufferings, deprive ourselves of all those comforts which might alleviate them, and convert them into lasting evils, for the remembrance of such sufferings must always be painful, and the fruits of them bitter indeed. But if, on the other hand, we submit with meekness and resignation to the will of our Creator; if we constantly endeavour to improve by every trial, and beg his assistance to support our weakness; we may then, even in the severest pain and the deepest affliction, still enjoy a happiness such as nothing in this world can give, or take away. Perfectly satisfied that we are the objects of his parental care, that no affliction can befal us but by his permission, and that He will suffer none to befal us but for our real good, we may indeed rejoice in suffering, and look up with a delightful confidence to Him who is able either to deliver us from the trial, or to support us under it; and who will never fail those who sincerely seek Him.—Every little alleviation of pain, every pleasure we can yet enjoy, will gain new relish from the thought that they are the gifts of our all-gracious Father,

and will no longer be damped by the apprehension of greater sufferings which may probably succeed, nor allayed by the thought of greater pleasures which we might have enjoyed in a different situation, since we are certain that all events are at his disposal, and that we shall enjoy as large a share of ease and comfort here, as is consistent with our greater good hereafter.

In such a state of mind, all the advantages we enjoy in this world, the means of obtaining assistance and comfort, and the kindness and attention of our friends, will make their due impression on our hearts: our sufferings will make us still more sensible of our blessings, and will furnish continual opportunities to strengthen the ties of friendship and benevolence, by the endearing intercourse of kindness and of gratitude; but all these advantages would be lost by dwelling continually on the dark side of things, and refusing every pleasure which yet remains in our power, because we cannot enjoy all that we desire. Some pleasures and comforts may generally be found in every state, and it is our duty, as well as interest, to receive them with thankfulness, and endeavour to improve them: but even should all be taken away, in the most comfortless situation with regard to this world, we may still, encouraged by his gracious promise, "cast all our care on Him who careth for us," and look forward without anxiety, secure of his assistance to support us in present sufferings, and of his providence to dispose all future events as shall be really best for us. We may then wait for the hour

of death, not only without terror, but with a joyful, a triumphant hope—yet without impatience, since we may be certain that every additional day of suffering, if well endured, and improved to the greatest advantage, will contribute to increase our happiness hereafter.

Thus, freed from all undue anxiety for the future, supported by an all-powerful assistance in every trial, and encouraged by the glorious prospect of everlasting happiness, "Who is he that shall harm you?" Not pain, nor sickness, nor losses, nor disappointments, though religion does not teach us a stoical indifference to any of these,—but it furnishes us with a happiness which they cannot take away, and which we may enjoy, even in the midst of the severest sufferings, and while we feel them with the keenest sensibility,—a happiness which will continually increase, and fill the soul with joy and exultation, even in that awful moment when all that the world calls happiness is remembered with indifference, perhaps with regret.

Then how comfortable will be the remembrance of every well-endured affliction, and how thankful shall we be for those trials which at present appear to us so severe! With the same filial submission, and entire confidence, with which we have resigned every day of our lives into the hands of our Creator, we shall resign the last; and all our transitory sufferings will be amply compensated by "joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

THE END.

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